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Affective Transcendentalisms:

Sense and Spirit in Emerson, Peabody, Thoreau, and Melville

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Mark Russell Gallagher

2021

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2021

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Affective Transcendentalisms:

Sense and Spirit in Emerson, Peabody, Thoreau, and Melville

by

Mark Russell Gallagher

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Daniel Walker Howe, Co-Chair

Professor Karen E. Rowe, Co-Chair

This dissertation considers the work of three representative writers of the Transcendentalist movement—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, and Henry David Thoreau—and one of its most ardent skeptics—Herman Melville. Rather than presuming a single Transcendentalism, this study proposes several models of "affective Transcendentalisms," interpreted as the various ways that these Transcendentalist writers speak for and of the spirit through the language of sense. "Affective Transcendentalisms" argues that the Transcendentalist movement comprises different affective experiences, each one an epistemology of the inner sense. Furthermore, these inner senses of spirit become sites of negotiation between a Transcendental idealism that would deny an embodied subjectivity and a

variety of attachments to transcendence and immanence that ultimately tell what Transcendentalism feels like.

American Transcendentalism is, in essence, a belief in the spirit. Their writings were affirmations of an intuitive soul in a quest to recover a faith in the spiritual. As such, the Transcendentalists posed a challenge to the Unitarian establishment on matters of divine inspiration and Christian evidences, on how or by what authority one could know God, by asserting intuition and inspiration over a Unitarianism that relied upon Lockean sensationalism and empiricism to affirm the miraculous in Christianity. This "spiritual philosophy" searched the soul for a personal, immediate connection with the divine. This meant cultivating a perception of truth, that is, a "Reason" that could read nature as symbol corresponding to the spiritual. These inner senses, however, were determined in large part by the physical senses themselves.

This affective discourse of sense and spirit can be found in Ralph Waldo Emerson's changing thoughts on the "moral sense" or "moral sentiment"; Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's millennial visions of "the life" through her idea of a "social principle"; and Henry David Thoreau's ideas about the "contact" between nature, humanity, and eternity in a "sympathy with intelligence." The present work also looks at how Herman Melville questions the epistemology of Transcendentalist "spirit." Thus considered, these affective Transcendentalisms anticipate in their own ways what William James will later call "radical empiricism," in the unity it perceives in sense experience and spiritual being.

The dissertation of Mark Russell Gallagher is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2021

for Denise

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this dissertation and are cited parenthetically.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

CS *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Albert J. von Frank et al. 4 vols. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989-92.

CW *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, Douglas Emory Wilson, Ronald A. Bosco et al. 10 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971-2013.

EL *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Stephen E. Whicher, Robert E. Spiller, and Wallace E. Williams. 3 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964-1972.

LL *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1843-1871*. Edited by Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson. 2 vols. Athens, GA, and London: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

JMN *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by William H. Gilman, et al. 16 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960-1982.

L *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Ralph Rusk and Eleanor M. Tilton. 10 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939, 1990-1995.

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

EPPL *Letters of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, American Renaissance Woman*. Edited, with an introduction, by Bruce A. Ronda. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984.

Henry David Thoreau

PJ *Journal*. Edited by John C. Broderick, Robert Sattelmeyer, Elizabeth Hall Witherell, et al. 8 vols. to date. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981—.

Week *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Edited by Carl Hovde et al. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Walden *Walden*. Edited by J. Lyndon Shanley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971.

MW *The Maine Woods*. Edited by Joseph J Moldenhauer. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972.

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A portion of my second chapter appears in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and Theologies of the Afterlife: A Step Closer to Heaven* (Routledge 2021). Chapter four of my dissertation appeared in an earlier form in *The New England Quarterly* for March 2019.

Finally, in the words of Henry David Thoreau, "I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual." To my family and friends who have made me what I am and have given me so much, I thank you. Most of all, to my children, Catherine and Brian, and my wife Denise, for your immeasurable love and unwavering support, I give my most heartfelt gratitude and affection.

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"Live Deliberately, Stay Woke: Thoreau's Influence on William Melvin Kelley." *Thoreau in an Age of Crisis: Uses and Abuses of an American Icon*. Edited by Kristen Case, Rochelle L. Johnson, and Henrik Otterberg. Paderborn, Germany: Brill/Wilhelm Fink, 2021.
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"Alcott and Adaptation" (moderator). Louisa May Alcott Society Panel. American Literature Association Conference. Boston, Massachusetts. May 21-24, 2021.
"Newman as Novelist." The Impact of John Henry Newman: Celebrating the Canonization of an Anglican and Catholic Saint. Georgetown University. Washington, D.C. February 25, 2020.
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"Thoreau's Sense of Connection." International Symposium, "Thoreau from Across the Pond." École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, Lyon (France). October 19-20, 2017. (In absentia.)
"No Truer American: Thoreau's Influence on Emerson's Later Lectures." Ralph Waldo Emerson Society Panel, "The Thoreauvian Emerson." Thoreau Bicentennial Gathering. Concord, Massachusetts. July 11-15, 2017.
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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation considers the work of three representative writers of the Transcendentalist movement—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, and Henry David Thoreau—and one of its most ardent skeptics—Herman Melville. Rather than presuming a single Transcendentalism, this study proposes several models of "affective Transcendentalisms," interpreted as the various ways that these Transcendentalist writers speak for and of the spirit through the language of sense. "Affective Transcendentalisms" argues that the Transcendentalist movement comprises different affective experiences, each one an epistemology of the inner sense. Furthermore, these inner senses of spirit become sites of negotiation between a Transcendental idealism that would deny an embodied subjectivity and a variety of attachments to transcendence and immanence that ultimately tell what Transcendentalism feels like.

American Transcendentalism is, in essence, a belief in the spirit. Its writings were affirmations of an intuitive soul in a quest to recover a faith in the spiritual. As such, the Transcendentalists posed a challenge to the Unitarian establishment on matters of divine inspiration and Christian evidences, on how or by what authority one could know God, by asserting intuition and inspiration over a Unitarianism that relied upon Lockean sensationalism and empiricism to affirm the miraculous in Christianity.[1] This "spiritual philosophy" searched the soul for a personal, immediate connection with the divine. This meant cultivating a

[1] By the time that they were labeled "the latest form of infidelity" in 1839, the Transcendentalists had been producing writings for and of the spirit for almost a decade. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Elizabeth Peabody, and Henry David Thoreau were just three of a larger group that included Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, as well as Orestes Brownson, Convers Francis, William Henry Furness, Frederic Henry Hedge, Ellen Sturgis Hooper, George Ripley, and Jones Very among others. For a comprehensive history of the Transcendentalist movement, see Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (2007).

perception of truth, that is, a "Reason" that could read nature as symbol corresponding to the spiritual. These inner senses, however, were determined in large part by the physical senses themselves.

This discourse of sense and spirit can be found in Ralph Waldo Emerson's changing thoughts on the "moral sense" or "moral sentiment," Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's millennial visions of "the life" through Christ's "social principle," and Henry David Thoreau's ideas about the "contact" between nature, humanity, and eternity in a "sympathy with intelligence." These writers represent the spectrum of belief and unbelief in the Transcendentalist movement. The present work also looks at how Herman Melville questions the epistemology of Transcendentalist "spirit." The most vocal of Transcendentalism's contemporaries, Melville uses irony to overturn the optimism of a Transcendentalist belief in a spiritual afterlife symbolized in Emerson and Thoreau's efforts at creating a garden cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts, on the once fabled Transcendentalist stomping grounds made famous in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846), the curiously named "Sleepy Hollow." By comparing Melville's position on spirit to that of the Transcendentalists, the teleology of spirit and the Transcendentalist attachment to the body are brought into relief. Thus considered, these affective Transcendentalisms anticipate in their own ways what William James will later call "radical empiricism," in the unity it perceives in sense experience and spiritual being.

Ralph Waldo Emerson had been "friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit" (Arnold 177) for the better part of a decade when he publicly accepted the title of "transcendentalist" in January 1842: "Our American literature and spiritual history are, we confess, in the optative mood; but whoso knows these seething brains, these admirable radicals, these unsocial worshippers, these talkers who talk the sun and moon away, will believe that this

heresy cannot pass away without leaving its mark" (*CW* I:207-08). Speaking at Boston's Masonic Temple at the height of the Transcendentalist movement, Emerson realizes the historical significance of the moment, underscoring its continuity with American literary and "spiritual history." Yet what sets the Transcendentalist apart, heretically so, is an insistence upon the intuitive inner senses as a way of knowing spirit, God, the divine. For Emerson, that meant a "tendency to respect the intuitions, and to give them, at least in our creed, all authority over our experience" (*CW* I:207). Just as their writings express a hope, an insight as to what *ought* to be, these "intuitions" of the Transcendentalists, while having authority *over* experience, were still dependent *upon* experience. Emerson goes on to say, "the history of genius and of religion in these times, though impure, and as yet not incarnated in any powerful individual, will be the history of this tendency." The history of Transcendentalism is surely a history of conscience, the sense of the "ought."[2] It is also, as Emerson says, a "spiritual history," as opposed to an ecclesiastical or religious history. The writings of the Transcendentalists are explorations of, in a common expression of the era, "the spirit of the times." How spirit was interpreted differed for each individual, each an affective experience that became part of the larger religious and social movement that is Transcendentalism.

Transcendentalism, as Emerson defines it, gives authority to intuition, a feeling for a truth. And for Emerson, Peabody, Thoreau, and others in the Transcendentalist circle, the varieties of spirit are attended by a kind of inner sense, inseparable from nature and external sense. "Affective Transcendentalisms" is an attempt to bring together an understanding of the inner senses of these three visionary writers who each represent distinctive positions of

[2] The Transcendentalists are easily the best studied and most researched writers in the American literary canon. A detailed historiography of the Transcendentalist movement is given by Charles Capper in "'A Little Beyond': The Problem of the Transcendentalist Movement in History" in *Transient and Permanent: The Transcendentalist Movement and Its Contexts* (1999), 3-45.

transcendence and immanence within Transcendentalism. It is an attempt, as well, to decipher the ironic cynicism of Herman Melville and try to answer the question, what did Transcendentalism, as an intuitive religious philosophy, feel like? To put it another way, what would a history of Transcendentalist feeling look like?

One answer is that Transcendentalism presupposes that spirit is knowable by intuition, and that one's intuitions are inseparable from the tuitions of the sense. At the beginning of the twentieth century, William James would offer a similar appraisal of transcendental feeling as part of his lecture on the "Varieties of Religious Experience" (1902). James uses Emerson and Thoreau as well as Margaret Fuller and Theodore Parker as examples of mystical, inspired states—perhaps not so much of acute ecstatic inspiration but rather a felt presence of the divine, ranging from immanence to transcendence. James' subject, however, is ultimately the psychology of religion, and Transcendentalism was never its own religion. Nor was Transcendentalism all that mystic. Nevertheless, James is an appropriate starting point in this study of Transcendentalism. "It is a commonplace of metaphysic," James says, "that God's knowledge cannot be discursive but must be intuitive, that is, must be constructed more after the pattern of what in ourselves is called immediate feeling, than after that of proposition and judgment" (397). "But," James adds, "our immediate feelings have no content but what the five senses supply." The Transcendentalists understood this, and made it their mission to find the unity between the natural and the spiritual.

"Affective Transcendentalisms" thus argues that the inner senses of intuition and inspiration—represented by the "moral sentiment," the "social principle," and "contact"—are attempts to resolve the inner conflicts between an idealism that denied substantial being to persons and an attachment to subjective experience through sensation. In other words,

Transcendentalism represents the religious conflict between the head and the heart, or rather, the heart over the head.

The Transcendentalist movement as it is traditionally understood began, in the words of Perry Miller, as a "religious demonstration" (8).[3] What it became, as a movement in the true sense by encompassing a wider range of individuals as it progressed, was a *spiritual* demonstration. This is not to say that the Transcendentalists had abandoned religion. Certainly, as represented by Peabody in this study, the majority of individuals associated with the movement were of a Christian Transcendentalism with a faith centered on the life and ministry of Jesus. On the other hand, Thoreau stands as an exception in his form of unbelief, for while Thoreau had objections to organized religion, he remained a spiritual seeker. Still others, like Emerson, were believers whose faith was somewhere in between the two. It is not, however, the aim of the present work to determine the faith of individuals, but rather to show how and why the external senses became a way for the Transcendentalists to communicate inner experiences of spirit. To this end, Transcendentalism was a spiritual demonstration.

It could be said that Transcendentalism was a reaction to what Charles Taylor describes as an "impersonal order" that gave rise to the secularity of the early-nineteenth century. Secularity, as Taylor defines it, pertains to the "conditions of belief" rather than a secular culture that results from it:

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[3] This "religious demonstration" was brought on, one could argue, by a crisis in faith. By the middle of the nineteenth century, church membership in Massachusetts had declined considerably. The manifestation of the Transcendentalists' new views, while a reaction against or outgrowth of Unitarianism, was also in effect part of a larger trend away from church membership precipitated by, among other things, changes in New England's religious landscape. This spiritual crisis was a major concern for the Transcendentalists, many of whom were either former Unitarian ministers who had vacated their pulpits or those who might be called disaffected ministers who were committed to changing the way New England worshipped after the Higher Biblical Criticism had cast doubts on historical Christianity. Taken as a whole, the writings of the Transcendentalists can be read as expressions of this change; specifically, how it feels to preserve one's faith in the face of spiritual disillusionment.

> The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace . . . . An age or society would then be secular or not, in virtue of the conditions of experience of and search for the spiritual. (3)

Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007) contests secularization "subtraction stories" that make the demise of religion and the rise of a self-sufficient humanism the inevitable condition of the modern world. At the same time, Taylor's argument tends to reinforce on a larger scale a narrative that scholars of Transcendentalism have understood for generations. That is to say, the Transcendentalists were active at a time when the "positing of a viable humanist alternative," such as the ideas they found in English, French, and German Romanticism, and the theistic ethics of latter-day forms of deism created an expansive "nova effect" which presented new possibilities for religious life (299). Transcendentalism represents one—or, perhaps, several—of such options. Taylor argues that an effect of secularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is that "God's relation with us comes to be seen as mediated by an impersonal, immanent order," a "self-contained" system of rational orders at the level of nature, society, and law (290). If, as Taylor contends, nineteenth-century Unitarianism is one such example of the shift to an impersonal order, Transcendentalist subjectivity can be understood as a reaction in the direction of transcendence, to find an order in spirit that is evidence of the soul.

Like Taylor, John Lardas Modern situates ideas about spirit that originate within Unitarianism, like those of Transcendentalism, within a narrative of "spirituality;" that is, it "traces the emergence of spirituality as a marker of liberal Protestant piety" by underscoring the shift in the cultural meaning of "spirituality." Modern argues that spirituality is a way of

knowing the world and that in the antebellum era, "this knowledge was pursued by way of theorizing affect, of harnessing the surplus of one's interior life," a pursuit which Modern points out begins with William Ellery Channing and Boston Unitarianism (13). By "theorizing affect," Modern means the interpretation of spirit in such forms as intuition and inspiration. "At the Romantic edge of antebellum Protestantism," Modern identifies spirit as arising from liberal Christianity's link with Scottish Common Sense via a spiritual discerning that "promised not salvation per se but the opportunity for the individual to see himself, God, the world around, and the relationship between them." Through self-cultivation of one's character, one could grow toward perfection and, ultimately, a perception of the divine.

What I am calling "affective Transcendentalisms" are those different intuitions of the soul which go a step further towards immanence and transcendence than the sentimentalism of nineteenth-century liberal Christianity, a step towards prophecy, by locating spirit in affect.[4] By the term "affect," I mean that which describes an impulse, power, or volition that circulates between individuals rather than a more cognitive emotion.[5] One's intuition, for example, appears precognitive, nonrational. It is not knowing in itself but a confirmation that one is. Inspiration operates in a similar way. When inspiration takes the form of a mystical epiphany, a line of

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[4] I distinguish "affect" from the more subjective "emotion," although more recently critics who theorize about "affect" use it with a more specific meaning, one that relates to discourses of the body. Informed by the work of critical theorist Gilles Deleuze and such psychiatrists as Silvan Tompkins and Félix Guattari, affect theorists Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg define affect as "synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*" (2). The work of Jane Thrailkill follows along the same lines as many affect theorists; however, in her 2007 book, *Affecting Fictions: Mind, Body, and Emotion in American Literary Realism*, Thrailkill embraces a criticism that feels its way into texts, claiming that "feeling is not opposed to interpretation but is part of it." Thrailkill's idea of affect prioritizes a discourse of the body but insists on the flexibility of the term as interchangeable with "emotion" and "feeling." However one chooses to differentiate feeling from the terms emotion and affect, it is clear that the affective turn is an important reassessment of how feeling represents and imagines states of knowing and being.

[5] In his study of "Sentimental Transcendentalism and Political Affect," Jeffrey Steele agrees that "'affect' is a useful category because it generalizes and desubjectifies the personalized concept of 'sentiment'" (*Towards a Female Genealogy of Transcendentalism* 209). Affect is synonymous with something like "collective feelings," according to Steele.

reasoning originating in the work of William James identifies the root of the behavior in the subliminal region of consciousness, that is, accessing thoughts and feelings from some part of the psyche that may feel altogether otherworldly. They are more like sensations or attachments to some object.[6] Affective Transcendentalisms are themselves optimistic attachments to metaphysical objects of spirit, including God, Christ, and eternity. Additionally, I use the term "affective" to distinguish those forces within Transcendentalism that come together to make it a *movement* as opposed to an event or a religious or philosophical position merely. In this way, I am thinking along the same lines as Sara Ahmed in her idea of "affective economies." "In such affective economies," Amhed says that, "emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments" (119). While Amhed studies how negative emotions create communities, my reading of Transcendentalism reads the movement as a positive affective economy organized around attachments to different ideas of spirit.

"Affective Transcendentalisms" is based on the premise that, in response to the emerging secularity of the early-nineteenth century, the Transcendentalists communicate a variety of religious experiences as different inner senses. Emerson, for example, theorizes about spirit in *Nature* (1836). "Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact," he states in the chapter on "Language" (*CW* I:18). More importantly, he elaborates that "every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture." Apprehension of spirit begins in sensual experience but one's subjectivity is lost to it:

[6] Such is the nature of Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism," a kind of desire which she defines as an optimistic attachment to an object that is not conducive to human flourishing. According to Berlant, "a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (1).

> Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone into the stream, and the circles that propagate themselves are the beautiful type of all influence. Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. And the blue sky in which the private earth is buried, the sky with its eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, is the type of Reason. That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator. Spirit hath life in itself. And man in all ages and countries, embodies it in his language, as the FATHER. (*CW* I: 18-19).

Spirit is something apart from Reason, a creative and life-giving animism that is evident in the energy of life, "within and behind" moral sentiments and perceived in the natural world around us. Furthermore, the theorizing of spirit as affect manifests itself in a secular understanding of a personal God, the "FATHER."

For Thoreau, what he might have otherwise called "spirit" is an "everlasting Something" (*Week* 173) experienced as a state of connection with the natural world. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), Thoreau states that humanity "needs not only to be spiritualized, but *naturalized*" (*Week* 379), and he pronounces such:

> We need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a *purely* sensuous life. Our present senses are but the rudiments of what they are destined to become. We are comparatively deaf and dumb and blind, and without smell or taste or feeling. Every generation makes the discovery, that its divine vigor has been dissipated, and each sense and faculty misapplied and debauched. The ears were made not for such groveling uses

> as they are now put to and worn out by, but to behold beauty now invisible. May we not *see* God?" (*Week* 382)

Thoreau does not see nature as simply the allegory of the spirit but instead sees a "*purely* sensuous" unity of the two. Nature seen, touch, tasted, smelled, and heard is the expression of spirit, despite the negation of the sensuous by the Emersonian idealism that influenced his thought.

Perhaps the most significant demonstration of Transcendentalist spirit as a response to secularity was the experiment in "spiritual culture" that Elizabeth Peabody took part in as a teacher in Bronson Alcott's Temple School. Alcott established his experimental school in Boston in 1834, where he was assisted first by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and later by Margaret Fuller. Peabody dedicated herself to the educational ideals of Bronson Alcott, which she defends in her preface to the second edition of *Record of a School* (1836), titled, "Method of Spiritual Culture," in which she attempts to systematize the act of reflection, the "contemplation of spirit":

> To contemplate Spirit in the Infinite Being, has ever been acknowledged to be the only ground of true Religion. To contemplate Spirit in External nature, is universally allowed to be the only true Science. To contemplate Spirit in ourselves, and in our fellow men, is obviously the only means of understanding social duty, and quickening within ourselves a wise Humanity.— In general terms,— Contemplation of Spirit is the first principle of Human Culture; the foundation of Self-education. (iii)

The goal of Alcott's teaching was to develop the Christ-like character of each student through a Socratic method that would approximate Jesus's dialogues. Peabody acknowledges the controversial nature of the curriculum's "disputed philosophy," saying, "the spirit within, is what is meant by *self* considered as an object of philosophical investigation," but, "I think myself, that

the lessons would more appropriately have been styled, analysis of human nature than self-analysis" (vii). There is more of an effort by Peabody to define and systematize spirit in terms that would be understandable to post-Enlightenment thought. Here, nonetheless, she takes a wider view of "self," expanding it beyond the Cartesian boundaries of the intellect to include the inner senses of self. Elsewhere, Peabody theorizes spirit as what she calls "the life." As will be shown, Peabody imagines having a spiritual experience in "A Vision" (1843), in which she testifies that, "I did not question my perceptions; I saw, and believed my senses," and that ends in a millennial vision of a living Christ (*Last Evening with Allston* 63).

To be sure, the history of Transcendentalist spirit begins in Unitarian moral philosophy. The radically religious men and women known as the Transcendentalists were, for the most part, members of the Unitarian community of Boston and Eastern Massachusetts where the Transcendentalist movement began. Nineteenth-century Unitarians believed in the ultimate perfection of the soul and that the formation of a Christian character could be obtained through spiritual improvement. This meant a moral self-discipline that would ideally result in a balance among the passions, the intellect, and the intuition. The result of this harmony was a detached moral rectitude that subsumed personality and deprived of religious experience what was constitutive of the human, that is, the immediacy of the senses.

The Transcendentalist position—if there was anything like consensus among them—was that Unitarianism over-intellectualized real, living affections, such that sentiment mattered more than sense. So much was said in the pages of the *Dial* by an early commentator on "The Unitarian Movement in New England," who writes, "there is…a degree of religious experience that Unitarianism fails to satisfy," that Unitarian preaching does not satisfy "religious feeling and experience," its fault being that it is "too intellectual," however Romantic a religion it may have

been.[7] To be fair, Unitarians valued the harmony of rational thought and sensibility. Such an emphasis on the ability to discern ethical conduct followed from a natural theology in which an intellect counterbalanced with the heart in the form of Reason (that is, intuitive apprehension) could reveal the divine nature of the universe.[8] What the Transcendentalists took issue with was this very assumption—that an indifferent ethical principle in the universe is compensated for by moral subjectivity. The heart's challenge to the authority of rational Christianity is, to be sure, a rather simple way to understand the division between Unitarian moral philosophy and Transcendentalism—if not the entire history of congregationalism in New England. Still, Transcendentalism saw itself as giving more credence to the heart than what Emerson considered a "corpse-cold" Unitarianism that was skeptical of the passions and against all forms of religious enthusiasm.[9]

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[7] William Dexter Wilson, "The Unitarian Movement in New England," *The Dial* 1 (April 1841): 436, 437.

[8] Unitarians agree with the rational intuitionists that, if Christianity is a revealed religion, then it holds true that the mechanism by which God reveals himself to man is through Reason. Yet the truth of Christianity is not revealed to the rational faculty of man but rather to his affective faculty. In other words, Unitarian piety is, in the words of John Emery Abbott, a matter of the heart. "Christianity is peculiarly a religion of the affections," he says, adding that "God has warmed our hearts with noble affections" (quoted in *Unitarian Conscience* 154). According to James Walker, "The essential truths of Christianity are … moral truths, truths addressed to the affections and the conscience, as well as the understanding. They must, therefore, be *felt* as well as perceived" ("M'Ilvaine's *Evidences of Christianity*" 188). The problem with this is that such affections could possibly be a Unitarian variety of religious enthusiasm. Like their Puritan ancestors, the Unitarians needed some kind of assurance. For the Puritans, the question was, how does one know grace when they feel it? But for a generation of Unitarians, the truth of one's own emotional testimony lacked supernatural assurance, as grace was a means to salvation through self-improvement. Clearly, one could rationalize the good in benevolent, social affections such as filial love, friendship, and sympathy. But on the level of the individual, moral feeling was always justified by reason. That which lay beneath or beyond the Reason would constitute the "new views" of the 1830s. Rational intuitionism would thus open the door to the more mystic impulses of the Transcendentalists, who would probe deeper to seek out the divinity beneath one's moral feelings.

[9] *JMN* 9:381. Unitarianism was rather staid in comparison to other denominations during the Second Great Awakening, or what Unitarianism would label as religious enthusiasm. Ministers such as Joseph Buckminster would say it is by the religious affections—by one's own volition whereby one chooses to love God—that the believer comes to faith and assists in spreading the revival. Buckminster writes that "it is difficult to free this affection from all suspicion of enthusiasm, in the opinion of those who have not God in all their thoughts, or who would make religion a mere exercise of reason, independent of the heart and affections." Again, Unitarians reminded themselves of the affective nature of religion which Buckminster asserts against a domineering Reason. Compare this to Hume who argues that rather than the discernment of moral distinctions by the Reason, moral sentiment works unaided and that reason is "slave of the passions." In addition to Buckminster, Unitarian evangelists included the likes of Edward

One of the points of my argument is that Transcendentalism, which attributed the very affections of life to an indwelling spirit, represents a departure from a sentimentalist and a sensationalist position within Unitarian moral philosophy. The former was embodied in what was termed by Unitarian leader William Ellery Channing as "self-culture." "By cultivating the proper 'sentiments,'" Unitarian self-culture held that, "a man could achieve that 'sensibility' required for the model Christian character," this according to Daniel Walker Howe (*Unitarian Conscience* 155). "A sentiment," Howe says, "was an emotional regard for a rational principle"; by cultivating those "affections in man, which not only suppose reason, but are founded on it; such as the love of truth, the love of beauty, the love of virtue, and the love of God" (as William Ellery Channing put it), one "could maintain contact with the spiritual world, and elevate himself above the mundane" (*Unitarian Conscience* 62-63).[10] It should be noted that Unitarians were not ethical sentimentalists but, rather, rational intuitionists modeled after Scottish Common Sense philosophy. What they believed was that there was something prior to the feeling of sentiment, not an innate idea but an inner sense.

Ideas about spirit were in some ways the products of the moral sense, which itself has a history going back to the eighteenth century. The idea originated with Frances Hutcheson who conceived of a moral sense as more than an emotion. "Its ultimate function is cognitive and, like the bodily senses, it operates more swiftly and surely to apprehend the moral qualities of actions

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T. Channing and Henry Ware, Jr., who would place significant value on the power of eloquence to affect audiences. Through "experimental preaching" and devotional literature, early-nineteenth century Unitarians planted the seeds of New England's reform culture, out of which would grow the Transcendentalist protest. See Joseph Buckminster *Works* (1839), II: 365-65.

[10] As Charles Taylor puts it, "Unitarianism, like the Arianism which inspired it, can be seen as an attempt to hold on to the central figure of Jesus, while cutting loose from the main soteriological doctrines of historical Christianity. What is important about Jesus is not that he inaugurates a new relation with and among us, restoring or transforming our relation to God," but that "Jesus' role in this is that of a teacher, by precept and example," and not a divine being (291).

than the reasoning process can," according to Barbara Packer (12). Unitarian ideas of a moral sense would be influenced by Scottish Common Sense philosophers, such as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart who supported a similar idea of intuitive principles.[11] Unitarianism was, however, devoted to the philosophy of John Locke. And "New England Unitarians were convinced that Christianity and the doctrine of immortality in particular were dependent on the existence of spirit," that they would "equate the 'mind' of Lockean philosophy with the 'soul' of Christian tradition" (*Unitarian Conscience* 41). Ultimately, the Transcendentalists opposed the Unitarian view informed by the sensationalist philosophy in the tradition of Locke which held to the outward revelations of scriptural truth and not innate ideas. The Transcendentalists rejected empirical philosophy and instead assented to a neoplatonic idealism that supported their convictions that an indwelling spirit of God, and not miracles, not the personhood of Jesus, but one's own moral sense is all the proof one needs of Christianity. With some exceptions, the "new school" largely embraced this "spiritual philosophy," the belief that Christianity was an internal principle comprised of intuition and inspiration, for which the moral sense was something like a springboard to these spiritual senses.[12]

The writings of the Transcendentalists were devotionals of a self, of a nature, of a world that was its own scripture, wherein the Bible was considered by many of the coterie as just another metaphysical instrument. As a result, critics such as Francis Bowen and Andrews Norton

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[11] Scottish Common Sense differed from what Locke called an "inner sense" that was as contingent upon sense experience as the physical senses. What is sometimes called Scottish realism argues for faculties of the mind that are *a priori* sense perception.

[12] The so-called spiritual philosophy was also known, prior to the age of spirit-rappers and mediums, as "spiritualism." Theodore Parker, for example, expounds on "spiritualism" as the "natural-religious view" or theory that "teaches that the world is not nearer to our bodies than God to the soul….As we have bodily sense to lay hold on matter and supply bodily wants, through which we obtain, naturally, all needed material things; so we have spiritual faculties, to lay hold on God, and supply spiritual wants; through them we obtain all needed spiritual things" (215-16).

accused the Transcendentalists of being apostates and their "new views" of Christianity as "the latest form of infidelity." In response to Emerson's Divinity School Address in 1838, Bowen refuted claims to moral authority by intuitive reason and moral sense alone, asserting that "in the perusal of Scripture the only reason for construing a passage in a metaphorical sense is, often, that by a literal interpretation, it would convey a doctrine utterly repugnant to all our moral feelings. The law written on the heart expounds the law graven on tables of stone" (321-22). While the Unitarian conscience was an affective means of Biblical interpretation, it did not, however, lend itself to a pietism that fully embraced emotion. Transcendentalism, on the other hand, embraced feeling and, above all, spirit over scripture.

At the height of the miracles controversy, Norton refuted this affective quality of Transcendentalism, almost ridiculing the naiveté of misguided intuitionists: "The religion of which they speak, therefore, exists merely, if it exists at all, *in undefined and unintelligible feelings,* having reference perhaps to certain imaginations, the result of impressions communicated in childhood, or produced by the visible signs of religious belief existing around us, or awakened by the beautiful and magnificent spectacles which nature presents."[13] A skeptical Norton describes Transcendentalism as a naïve, romantic religion. But it is in the "undefined and unintelligible feelings" that its faith exists. For if they could know these sensations better, then they might better understand the nature of divinity and discern the spirit of God within. On the other side of the miracles controversy, the Transcendentalists would claim that Unitarian rationality relied too much on the supernatural doctrine of Christ's divinity. Perhaps, as George Ripley and Theodore Parker contended, God reveals himself not in unexplainable events but in ineffable experiences.

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[13] Quoted in Miller, 212; emphasis added.

However significant Unitarian moral philosophy was to Transcendentalism, there was still the important contribution made to the movement by the Romantics, such as Thomas Carlyle, William Wordsworth, and most especially Samuel Taylor Coleridge. If one point should be made about the influence of Coleridge on the Transcendentalists, it is in his distinction between the Reason and Understanding. In Coleridge's formulation, the super-sensuous and intuitive Reason was superior to the analytical power of the Understanding. Nevertheless, all sense experience, including what Coleridge called an "inner sense" such as the imagination, was the domain of Understanding. By extension, Coleridge maintained that there was a spiritual sphere separate from the natural sphere, and that Reason pertained to things spiritual while the Understanding could only interpret natural sensation. How Transcendentalism differs is that it tends to recombine the two. In *Nature*, Emerson proclaims that "nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us" (*CW* I: 30). In "A Vision," Peabody argues that a purely aesthetic or spiritual life is no substitute for "the life" (nor is there a Christ without a person or subjectivity.) And in the pages of *Walden* (1854), Thoreau experiences the divine in a sense of the eternal present.

To call Transcendentalism "affective," then, is to call attention to what distinguishes it from both Unitarian sensationalism and the Romantic tradition in the Transcendentalists' own search for the spirit. The Coleridgean Reason could not accommodate the Transcendentalist quest for unity between Nature and Spirit. To be sure, the Transcendentalists favored intuition and inspiration—senses they shared with liberal Christianity and Romanticism, though they would differ on whose authority they spoke. While on one end someone such as Henry Hedge stayed relatively conservative and true to scriptural authority, on the other end of the spectrum a

figure like Jones Very would declare a will-less existence and a life “in obedience to the spirit” (xxv).

The affective Transcendentalisms that this dissertation will consider—the “moral sense”/ “moral sentiment,” the “social principle,” and “contact”—are those that shape such works as Emerson’s *Nature*, Peabody’s “A Vision,” and Thoreau’s *A Week* and *Walden*. These writings are examples of what Lawrence Buell calls the tradition of “literary scripturalism.” Buell explains how “a shift in biblical studies … in which the traditional view had to contend against varying shades of liberalization, including the claim that the Bible was no more inspired than any other document,” led to the production of new scriptural forms:

> The erosion of the Bible’s privileged status acted as a literary stimulus insofar as it prompted creative writers to think of secular literature as a legitimate and even rival means of conveying spiritual experience. During the Romantic period especially, the distinction between sacred and secular writing was not just blurred but sometimes even inverted by such claims as the argument that Scripture is only a form of poesis, hence dependent for its authority on inspired vision, which artists have in greatest measure. Consequently, a number of Anglo-American writers, starting with Blake in England and Emerson in America, took the position that the poet has the right, indeed the duty, to reconstruct mythology for himself and his era. In the second place, the decline of scriptural authority was symptomatic of a general softening of dogmatic structures, particularly in mainline Protestant sects, that had the effect of pushing homiletics and apologetics themselves in a more literary direction away from the systematic presentation of doctrine and toward impressionistic appeals to intuition and experience. (167)

“Ultimately,” Buell contends, “this drift toward subjectification threatened to deprive the would-be believer of any objective referent for the ‘religious sentiment’ and indeed of any secure criteria for determining whether a given utterance, scriptural or secular, was or was not inspired. This is the Trojan horse of the higher criticism” (168). Buell’s study of literary scripturalism is useful for contextualizing my own study of affective Transcendentalism since Buell includes the writings of the Transcendentalists and also Herman Melville. For Buell, Melville’s *Moby-Dick* (1850) is the fictional counterweight to Emerson’s lofty “Illusions.” In this dissertation, Melville’s short story, “The Apple-Tree Table; Or, Original Spiritual Manifestations” (1855), parodies Transcendentalist spirit by undermining a faith in spiritual resurrection which many (including Nathaniel Hawthorne) placed in the new Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts.

My study of affective Transcendentalisms makes the argument that the Transcendentalist conflict of heart over head ultimately reasserts an attachment to the personal, the subject, and that this recovery of sense for spirit is a response to an emerging secularity in the early-nineteenth century “impersonal order.” As liberal Christianity leaned toward rationality, Emerson, Peabody, and Thoreau find truth in religious feeling, discovering what is divine in the human. The reassertions of the immanent and transcendent is significant as a religious reform considering how Transcendentalism as a movement developed alongside many of the social and political reforms taking place in New England in the early-nineteenth century, including both the abolitionist movement and women’s rights movement. The following chapters, though they are arranged in a loose chronology, do not impose an overarching narrative to my study. What connects them is the variant pathways, through subjective experience and philosophical

reflection literarily registered and promulgated, each author travels as they pursue spirit in terms of an inner sense.

The first chapter, "Ralph Waldo Emerson, Spirit, and the Moral Sense," considers how Emerson's early transcendentalism, shaped by philosophical idealism, the higher biblical criticism, and empirical science, is ultimately a matter of spirit. It begins with a background on how the moral sense and the emergent spiritual philosophy shaped the early writings of Emerson. This reading of the spiritual Emerson chronicles how the relationship between spirit and the moral sense is defined and redefined through the sermons and becomes more invested in sense. Continuing with discussions of the Lord's Supper controversy and another on Emerson's "Uses of Natural History" and his "First Philosophy," the chapter examines Emerson's years when he develops his ideas on spirit out of a search for order in nature. The dichotomy between spirit and nature will be unified in *Nature*. In *Nature*, sensation becomes a way of knowing a spirit full of transcendent possibilities. Something changes, however, when Emerson gives his Divinity School Address. The experience with spirit is limited, an experience of immanence only. The chapter concludes with some observations on this new, immanent experience, and how the "moral sentiment" becomes reinterpreted as the "New Teacher" in the Divinity School Address.

Chapter 2 is titled "Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Christ, and the Social Principle." While many studies of Transcendentalism cast Margaret Fuller as the central woman of the movement, I make the case that Elizabeth Palmer Peabody should be considered among Fuller, Thoreau, and Emerson as a major figure. Her Transcendentalism is rooted in her postmillennial Unitarian faith. Transcendentalism was shaped by larger, optimistic, and progressive views of history influenced by millennialism.[14] That said, this chapter is a critical reassessment of the early career of

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[14] "This theological liberalism was combined with an optimistic expectancy about human development that expressed itself in an anticipation, grounded in nineteenth-century Protestant millennialist thinking, of a

Peabody in her religious writings. This revisionist reappraisal includes the discovery of a number of previously unrecorded published works from this neglected female Transcendentalist, among them Peabody's "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" (1835). A series of letters to her friend and mentor, William Ellery Channing, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" represents an early attempt by Peabody to articulate a Christian social theology based on her understanding of the millennium as a personal, individual process of revelation, an unfolding of the soul. The chapter discusses the postmillennial Christology of this series and her essay titled "A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society" (October 1841), on the subject of Association and the Brook Farm community that Peabody understands to be the product of an affective "social principle." Lastly, in "A Vision," the author relates an apparently mystic experience in which she senses the millennium unfolding before her eyes.

Chapter 3, "Henry David Thoreau, Time, and Contact," discusses Henry David Thoreau's sense of "contact," his communion with the world that shapes his excursion narratives. Through contact Thoreau transcends secular time and experiences eternity in a sacred present. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, for example, recounts a journey through time and space as Thoreau meditates on, among a number of many things, friendship. In *Walden*, Thoreau establishes a sense of place that bonds him to what is eternal, seeking out a more sensuous solitude. His ideas about friendship change into more expansive views of human community in *The Maine Woods* (1864), before developing a new idea of relational knowing, "Sympathy with Intelligence," in his late essay, "Walking" (1862).

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revolutionary era in human religious practice," according to David M. Robinson, who see Transcendentalism as the convergence of this and "post-Christian" ideas ("'A Religious Demonstration'" 53).

Finally, Chapter 4, “Herman Melville and the Problem of Transcendentalist Spirit,” reads Herman Melville as a critic of Transcendentalism in his gothic parody of spirit in his short story, “The Apple-Tree Table; or, Spiritual Manifestations” (1856). Melville makes a comic correction in this ironic treatment of Transcendentalist ideas about resurrection and spiritual afterlife. The cipher that is this version of “Sleepy Hollow” takes its inspiration, I argue, from the newly consecrated Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts. Melville’s satire becomes a counterpoint to the varieties of spiritual experiences that epitomize Transcendentalism from the 1830s up through the 1850s. The idea of an immortal, immaterial spirit, as opposed to material nature, is for Melville something of a tautology, or at the very least a naïve presumption in the history that intertwines spiritualism, millennialism, and Transcendentalism, too.

CHAPTER 1

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Spirit, and the Moral Sense

What marks the beginning of Transcendentalism as a *literary* movement is, undoubtably, the publication of *Nature*. Perhaps Emerson's resignation from the Second Church could be taken as the event that marks the beginning of Transcendentalism as a *religious* movement, the high-water mark of that being the Divinity School Address. Then again, *Nature* inaugurates something new, a new truth. There were, of course, several other important books published by members of the newly formed Transcendental Club that same year, the "*annus mirabilis*" of 1836.[1] Still, *Nature* became the sacred scripture that elevated a "remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground" (Cabot 1:128) to an actual *movement* that influenced not only American literature but the larger social and cultural spheres of the nineteenth century. What constitutes this movement, and the reason that *Nature* was as influential as it was, has less to do with "nature" and much more to do with "spirit."

Spirit is something that moves, circulates, causes, creates, and is that which generally intensifies experience. It is an idea that takes more precedence in Emerson's thought just prior to his resignation in 1832. And it was an idea which resonated with the authors of and audience for Transcendentalism in the 1830s and 1840s who came to it dissatisfied as they were with a rationalized liberal Christianity, and disaffected by the increasing secularity of nineteenth century culture. To them, *Nature* offered a rehabilitated idealism infused with a belief in a divine and deifying spirit that challenged the empirical philosophy of sensation. But for Emerson, who had at one time considered writing a companion volume under the title of "Spirit," the appeal of

[1] In *The Transcendentalists* (1950), Perry Miller applies the term "*annus mirabilis*" to designate the year that the Transcendentalist movement began in earnest.

spirit is lost not long after he publishes *Nature*. Indeed, Emerson revisits this aspect of *Nature* when he speaks to the "moral sentiment" in the Divinity School Address and finds that "the spirit only can teach" (*CW* I:84).

In the chapter from *Nature* titled "Spirit," Emerson describes how one comes to a knowledge of spirit through inspiration:

> But when, following the invisible steps of thought, we come to inquire, Whence is matter? and Whereto? many truths arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness. We learn that the highest is present to the soul of man, that the dread universal essence, which is not wisdom, or love, or beauty, or power, but all in one, and each entirely, is that for which all things exist, and that by which they are; that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; that spirit is one and not compound; that spirit does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves. Therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. As a plant upon the earth, so a man rests upon the bosom of God; he is nourished by unfailing fountains, and draws, at his need, inexhaustible power. Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man? Once inhale the upper air, being admitted to behold the absolute natures of justice and truth, and we learn that man has access to the entire mind of the Creator, is himself the creator in the finite. (*CW* I:38)

Faced with questions of "Whence" and "Whereto" about the nature of matter, Emerson finds answers in intuition. Truths, he proclaims, "arise to us out of the recesses of consciousness," after one ascends "the invisible steps of thought," taking them, presumably, as far as is

epistemologically possible. Beyond the rational, orderly staircase of the mind, behind thought, is where the highest truth is revealed. His revelation is that spirit is infinite, eternal, and internal. It is "one and not compound." It is a cause, a power. Just "as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old," the organs of plant respiration becoming the origins of its physical regeneration, so does spirit move through nature. Likewise, one "inhale[s] the upper air" and, so inspired, perceives the ideal.

Through inspiration, one becomes intuitively aware of one's being in spirit, and sees that nature is subservient to the spirit.[2] That same spirit, Emerson says, is coextensive with "Supreme Being," prompting him to ask, "Who can set bounds to the possibilities of man?" This presents an ontological quandary: What, then, does subjectivity amount to? If human *being* is not entirely distinct from that of the Supreme Being, what makes man separate from God? Apparently, it is a distinction without a difference, at least as far as the possibility of moral perfection is concerned.[3] Subjectivity is arguably a product of sensation, and Emerson makes it clear in *Nature* that one's initiation into the divine is not accomplished through sensation. Whatever transcendent possibilities exist beyond the self, Emerson proclaims that they consist in first being "admitted" to the highest truths and given "access" to the eternal, the "entire mind of the Creator." As will be shown, this moral inseparability in spirit, the essence of Emerson's affective Transcendentalism, is one that Emerson locates in the moral sense.

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[2] Jonathan Bishop proposes that this sense of being was a "bodily sense" which might be thought of as the "organic faculty" of the soul (*Emerson on the Soul* 28).

[3] In *Freedom and Fate* (1953), Stephen E. Whicher points out that "the distinction is a secondary or relative one, between possibility and actuality, and not between two separate things; the thought that stirs Emerson is that God is essentially self, and that ideally or poetically the two should and can be identical" (54).

Emerson is fully invested in spirit when he writes *Nature*. When he delivers his Divinity School Address two years later, however, Emerson takes his transcendent vision of *Nature* and builds around it an immanent frame:

> But the moment the mind opens, and reveals the laws which traverse the universe, and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of this mind. What am I? and What is? asks the human spirit with a curiosity new-kindled, but never to be quenched. Behold these outrunning laws, which our imperfect apprehension can see tend this way and that, but not come full circle. Behold these infinite relations, so like, so unlike; many, yet one. I would study, I would know, I would admire forever. These works of thought have been the entertainments of the human spirit in all ages. (*CW* I:76-77)

Almost identical questions to those found in “Spirit” are raised here in the Divinity School Address. This time, however, matter is exchanged for “I” and “is.” This time, the “law” that Emerson discovers is that of diminished returns, as the earlier image of transcending ascension in *Nature* becomes in the *Address* an image of limitation, of almost futile “entertainments” of the once co-creator in the finite, material world. Something has clearly changed for Emerson. Here the high tide of Emerson’s idealism recedes as the emphasis shifts away from the radical religious sensibility of *Nature* to a “human spirit” characterized by a “curiosity,” one that was evident in the rhapsody of “Spirit.” The subjectivity denied in *Nature* is asserted in the Divinity School Address, while transcendence is exchanged for immanence.

Emerson recognizes that one’s “imperfect apprehension” is a perception, partly dependent upon sensation, that reads nature as symbol of the spirit. To be sure, this knowing of spirit owes much of its history to the Neoplatonism and rational intuitionism of Emerson’s

Unitarian background. As such, it is an extension of and departure from Emerson's earlier concept of the moral sense. In his early writings, Emerson defines "Moral Sense" as "a rule coextensive and coeval with Mind" that distinguishes right from wrong, "manifestly not from *matter*, which is altogether unmoved by it," he says, "but from a *Mind*, of which it is the essence. "That Mind is God" (*JMN* 2:49). Emerson early on believes that the moral sense is as close to knowing God as can be apprehended. Accordingly, the Emerson of the sermons is a minister of the moral sense, gradually embracing a discourse of spirit as his career progresses. But then after the publication of *Nature*, Emerson gives more deference to the human and to sensation. The spirit alone is not enough. One needs a teacher, Emerson will say, a "New Teacher" capable of transforming human consciousness.

Emerson's early Transcendentalism, shaped by philosophical idealism, the higher biblical criticism, and empirical science, is ultimately a matter of spirit. Albert J. von Frank has said that "the single greatest obstacle to a robust understanding of Emerson is the embarrassingly irreducible mystical or 'religious' element" (290). For von Frank, this means taking Emerson as a "theoretician of the spirit," a latter-day gnostic despite what little historical interest he may have had in the subject of Gnosticism (289). "Emerson's acceptance of the gnostic call," in his projected new career as, first, a naturalist, and later, a sage of the lyceum and an oracle of the press, "provided the immediate ground of the exchange he made between 1832 and 1836 of pulpit for poetry" (304). Emerson's vocational experimentation was underscored by this "gnostic call." For there is a desire for order in Emerson that motivates his quest to know God. That order, known by the God and the teacher within, is spirit, while the way of knowing is through the moral sense, which Emerson sometimes refers to as the "moral sentiment," a sense or sentiment that responded to the "moral law."

Traditionally, the story of Emerson's early career is told as one of a "noble doubt" about "whether nature outwardly exists," and of how Emerson rejects the vulgarity of sensation (*CW* I:29)[4] I argue that sensation is more complicated in Emerson's understanding of it, particularly in light of his belief in a moral sense. This chapter will begin with background on the moral sense, before chronicling how the relationship between spirit and the moral sense is defined and redefined through Emerson's sermons. Two biographical sections follow, one on the Lord's Supper controversy and the other on Emerson's "Uses of Natural History" and his "First Philosophy," which delve deeper into the critical years when Emerson develops his ideas on spirit. In *Nature*, sensation becomes a transcendent way of knowing spirit. The chapter concludes with observations on how sense and spirit become more immanent in the Divinity School Address.

Moral Sense and the Common Sense Philosophy

Central to Emerson's early thought is the concept of the moral sense, or moral sentiment. This "commanding character…the sense of justice, veracity, and benevolence" Emerson elaborates on at length in his lecture on "Holiness," delivered as part of his Human Culture series in December 1838 (*EL* II:344). "Moral sentiment is the basis of nature," he declares. "The sentiment is the ultimate fact, and cannot be defined. It is alive, and maketh alive," adding, "It is wholly impersonal; it passes through my whole being, and I cannot think without being affected by it….It is the breath of the soul of the world and therefore as it passeth through us, makes us

[4] It is Joel Porte's contention that "Emerson was driven to accept the Ideal theory because he found sense experience distasteful, but not at all because he really believed that the world was an illusion. Convinced by temperament and training that the mind and the body, the spirit and nature, were not only separate but unequal, that the soul was higher, finer, truer than matter, he needed a theory, other than Christianity, that would bestow intellectual dignity upon these sentiments" ("Emerson's Noble Doubt" 462).

feel our unity with all other beings" (*EL* II:345, 346). Much of what Emerson sets forth about the moral sentiment or moral sense, not only here but in his original scripture on *Nature* as well as in his controversial *Address*, is surprisingly conventional, adhering as it does to the standard Unitarian philosophy of the time. On the other hand, Emerson's concept runs counter to the more intuitive concept associated with liberal Christianity. It is affective; that is, it "passes," or "passeth through," as he says, establishing an empathic connection between humanity and an immanence with God. This elusive, undefinable essence is the "breath of the soul of the world." It is, what Emerson describes in *Nature* as simply "spirit," of which nature is its expression. The Divinity School Address emphasizes the moral sentiment, too, though it is the knowledge of the thing that a Christ-like "Teacher" could impart on the human race.

The idea of a moral sense common among nineteenth-century Unitarians was informed in large part by eighteenth-century moral philosophy, particularly that of the Scottish Common Sense school, which Emerson studied at Harvard and which formed the basis for his thinking. Joel Porte contends that "Emerson nowhere shows greater affinity to the eighteenth century than in his firm belief in the 'moral sense,' or 'moral sentiment,' or 'Moral Law'" (*Emerson and Thoreau* 68). This idea of a moral sense, rooted in Lockean epistemology and communicated through Unitarianism, changes in Emerson's conception of it from the early journal entries of the 1820s to the *Address* in 1838. That is to say, the moral sense became something more than conscience for him; it became a way of intuitively knowing an ideal of moral perfection, of knowing God.

That man could intuit good and evil by some faculty was one of the debates that would divide New England piety between the evangelical and liberal positions earlier that century. This debate was largely informed by the philosophy of John Locke, whose vision of a rational order to

the universe as reflected in the human mind is the epitome of Enlightenment rationality. The Enlightenment tempered a philosophical enthusiasm for the passions, privileging a cool-headed reason that restrained the sometimes violent and destructive energy that the emotions could unleash on the world. Out of the philosophy of Lockean sensationalism came a doctrine of rational intuitionism popular among Cambridge Platonists, of both old and New England, which held that ideas of good and evil were ascertained empirically through the understanding.[5]

The belief in the moral sense began as an ethical theory in the eighteenth century with the philosophy of the so-called Sentimentalists. Lord Shaftsbury introduced the idea of the moral sense as the affection behind an action, the feeling responsible for benevolent "social affections." Not long after him, Francis Hutcheson defined the moral sense as "an affection for an affection," the consent to good feeling in all good things. Jonathan Edwards made his own assault on Lockean epistemology with his idea of an impulsive will that is *a priori* understanding. Edwards retains his Calvinist orthodoxy, especially when he theorizes about the nature of religious affections as a special sense given by God's grace, but he and the work of the sentimentalists sowed the seeds of a new affective piety that would take root in New England in the following century.[6]

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[5] For the influence of Richard Price on Emerson see Joel Porte, *Emerson and Thoreau: Transcendentalists in Conflict* (1967), 68-83. For the influence of Dugald Stewart on Emerson, see Merrell R. Davis, "Emerson's 'Reason' and the Scottish Philosophers," *The New England Quarterly*, 17:2 (June 1944), 209-228. For an account of the later reproachment of Transcendentalism with Unitarianism based on their sanguinity with Cambridge Platonism, see Daniel Walker Howe, "The Cambridge Platonists of Old England and the Cambridge Platonists of New England," in *American Unitarianism: 1805-1865* (1989).

[6] "But the student who seeks for a comprehensive Harvard Unitarian refutation to Edward's …*Freedom of the Will* is," Daniel Walker Howe says, "disappointed." "In fact, the antebellum Harvard moralists devoted remarkably little energy to the issue of free will, either as a logical or a psychological problem. Edwards's argument seemed to them unassailable and yet unconvincing. So they were content to accept the freedom of the will as a datum of consciousness, that is, as a principle of common sense, and declare that it required no proof" (*Unitarian Conscience* 67-68).

Unitarians took their idea of a moral sense from Scottish Common Sense philosophers who claimed it as a rational faculty. Scottish philosophers such as Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, and Richard Price posited that a "common sense" formed the basis of what the mind knows of ultimate reality, that the world exists because the mind itself is the evidence of it. The ethical theory of rational intuitionism would ultimately prove to be more influential in the United States than were the religious affections of the earlier school of Jonathan Edwards. Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, for example, who proclaimed that the Common Sense philosopher Richard Price "saved me from Locke's Philosophy [and] moulded my philosophy into the form it has always retained" (*Memoir* I:66), defined sentiment in rationalistic terms, saying that "Sentiment is not mere feeling, it is feeling penetrated with thought" (Peabody, *Reminiscences* 154). For liberal Christianity, the moral sense ultimately gave a way to recover the value of human emotions.

The secular moral sense became transformed by Unitarian ministers into something more religious in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. It was during this time that Unitarian ministers found provocation in the moral sentimentalism of Adam Smith and David Hume for whom moral sentiment was based not in rational understanding but in sympathy, or fellow-feeling and for whom moral sentiment was inherently more social than earlier notions of the moral sense. Still, the concept of a moral sense to which Emerson subscribed had a wider currency, especially among the liberal Christians at the time. It would still be some time before James Marsh published Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* for the first time in the United States in 1829 and Thomas Carlyle started introducing Americans to German thought with his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* in 1830 that a more romantic sensibility would begin to differentiate the Transcendentalist school within Unitarianism.

Harvard moral philosophy, steeped in Scottish Common Sense, was an important influence on the early thought of Emerson. While a young schoolmaster, Emerson began to write more seriously, taking up the subject of the moral sense. Several months before his first publication, “Thoughts on the Religion of the Middle Ages,” was printed in the November 1822 *Christian Disciple*, the forerunner of the *Christian Examiner*, Emerson announced in his “Wide World VII” journal that he endeavors to “give some account” of God, specifically through his relation with humanity through the “Moral law” (*JMN* II:5). “Its divine origin,” he says, “is fully shewn by its superiority to all the other principles of our nature. It seems to be more essential to our constitution, than any other feeling whatever,” adding that “It dwells so deeply in the human nature that we feel it to be implied in consciousness. Other faculties fail, — Memory sleeps; Judgement is impaired or ruined; Imagination droops; — but the moral sense abides there still” (*JMN* II:5). For Emerson, the moral law is a part of human nature as much as it is divine. He goes on to say that, “It has no taint of mortality in the purity & unity of its intelligence; it is perfectly spiritual. It sometimes seems to sanction that Platonic dream, that the soul of the individual was but an emanation from the Abyss of Deity, and about to return when it flowed” (*JMN* II:6).[7] Because God is, in essence, moral perfection, the indwelling of divinity presents the possibility of moral perfection in man.

Emerson began to embrace natural religion during this time, in large part due to the influence of William Ellery Channing. The same year that Emerson foretold in his 1821 Bowdoin Prize Essay that the future of ethical philosophy would lay “in the school in which Reid

[7] Emerson shares a similar observation about dreaming in his later lecture on “The Moral Sense,” delivered on March 18, 1860: “It has been said, that without the phenomenon of sleep, we should be atheists; because, if we had no experience of the interruption of the activity of the will, we could never be brought to a sense of its dependence on the Divine Will.” *LL* II:143.

and Stewart have labored," was also the year that Channing gave the Dudleian Lecture at Harvard.[8] "Evidences of Revealed Religion" is Channing's defense of Christianity as a "miraculous religion" (4). From this premise, Channing proceeds to rationalize his defense of Christian miracles against scientific and moral skepticism. Channing concludes with recourse to the moral sense: "There is another evidence of Christianity, still more internal than any on which I have yet dwelt, an evidence to be *felt* rather than described, but not less real, because founded on feeling" (34). Likewise, Emerson remarks in his journal that "the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination, than of 'Reasoning Machines' such as Locke and Clarke and David Hume," adding that "Dr. Channing's Dudleian Lecture is the model of what I mean, and the faculty which produced this is akin to the higher flights of fancy" (*JMN* II:238). As will be shown, in his book *Nature* Emerson uses the same form as Channing, higher flights of fancy and all.

It was Channing's perfectionist theology of self-culture that would exert an even stronger effect on Emerson's thought. In his journal, Emerson asks the question, "What is God?", to which he answers, "The most elevated conception of character that can be formed in the mind. It is, the individual's own soul carried out to perfection" (JMN III:182). David Robinson points out that this is nearly identical to Channing's formulation: "God is another name for human intelligence raised about all error and imperfection, and extended to all possible truth" (*Works* 384). Emerson agrees with Channing that the divine within requires character formation. Nevertheless, while Channing exerted a positive influence on Emerson's faith, the skepticism of the higher Biblical criticism as well as David Hume posed a formidable threat.

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[8] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Present State of Ethical Philosophy," *Two Unpublished Essays: The Character of Socrates; The Present State of Ethical Philosophy* (1895), 43-81.

By January 1823, Emerson had fully accepted a Unitarian idea of the moral sense. He declares,

> It is in the constitution of the mind to rely with firmer confidence upon the *moral principle*, and I reject at once the idea of a delusion in this. This is woven vitally into the thinking substance itself so that it cannot be diminished or destroyed without dissipating forever that spirit which had inhabited. Upon the foundation of my *moral sense*, I ground my faith in the immortality of the soul, in the existence & activity of good beings, and in the promise of rewards accommodated hereafter to the vicious or virtuous dispositions which were cultivated here. (*JMN* II:83)

Jonathan Bishop notes that there is a seeming hypocrisy in a self-reliant Emerson believing in what some might see as a conventional morality. "Viewed from without, moral sentiments may seem conventions; experienced from within, they are a part of the self that acts, and they *feel* like motives" (*Emerson* 69). "At such moments," Bishop states that, "law *is* sentiment" (*Emerson* 70). Thus, one's faith stands on the ground of internal evidence, not the historical, empirical, or even the miraculous. Emerson may seem rather provincial when he makes the universal laws seem at home in a genteel nineteenth-century New Englander, a form of cultural stoicism for sure; nevertheless, the matter for this study? is not whether Emerson's claim is more or less anthropological in nature but how he expresses these subjective religious truths.

According to Neal Dolan, "Emerson held strictly, persistently, and often jubilantly to what he saw as a universal moral law," and that this "formed the backbone of Emerson's moral thought and the structuring principle of many of his essays" (9). At the same time, as Emerson became more of an idealist, he increasingly saw the correspondence between the objective and

subjective experience, the unity of mind and matter, in spirit.[9] During this time, Emerson dedicates himself to a career that allows him to speak to and for the spirit and to develop his philosophy—what his contemporaries termed "spiritual philosophy."[10]

"The God Within": Moral Sense in the Sermons

When reading Emerson's sermons—especially the more daring ones delivered both before and after he resigned his pulpit—one gets the impression, as Elizabeth Palmer Peabody once did, that they are "all as truly transcendental as any of his later lectures and writings in prose or verse."[11] It is for this reason that scholars have used the sermons as a way to read the essays, to track the ideas from their nascent into their mature form. Emerson makes clear from his first sermon, "Pray without Ceasing," that his religion is internal because man's ultimate nature is of the spirit: "It ought to be distinctly felt by us that we stand in the midst of two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit. Our bodies belong to one; our thoughts to the other." (*CS* 1:55) In the old distinction, the human is divided between the material and the spiritual. There is the body and its feelings; the spiritual is composed of thoughts. He continues:

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[9] On the "emergence" of Emerson's romantic idealism from Unitarian philosophy, as influenced by the Cambridge Platonists Baron de Gerando, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, see the chapter on "Spiritual Laws" in Mary Kupiec Cayton, *Emerson's Emergence: Self and Society in the Transformation of New England, 1800-1845* (1989), 57-79.

[10] Convers Francis, for example, writes in 1836, "it seems the spiritualists are taking the field in force. I have long seen that the Unitarians must break into two schools, — the Old one, or English school, belonging to the sensual and empiric philosophy, — and the New one, or the German school (perhaps it may be called) belonging to the spiritual philosophy. The last have the most of truth; but it will take them some time to ripen, and meanwhile they will be laughed at, perhaps, for things that will appear visionary and crude. But the great cause of spiritual truth will gain far more by them than by the others." Quoted in John Weiss, *Discourse Occasioned by the Death of Convers Francis* (1863), 28-29.

[11] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, "Emerson as Preacher," *The Genius and Character of Emerson* (1898), 154. Peabody regularly attended Emerson's sermons in East Lexington during the years Emerson was a supply minister living in Concord. She was lecturing on him at the Concord School of Philosophy in the summer of 1884 when she recalled one sermon in particular, Sermon XCV, "which, if it could be read in this place to-day, would, better than all my poor words, convey the view I would fain give of Mr. Emerson as always the preacher of the eternal life, entirely emancipated from the 'letter which killeth,' and minister of the Spirit which maketh alive." The manuscript for Sermon XCV dates to November 13, 1830, and was delivered a total of fourteen times at as many parishes over a period of about seven years, including November 27, 1836, in East Lexington, Massachusetts.

"It is time men should be instructed that their inward is more valuable than their outward state: that thoughts and passions, even those to which no language is ever given, are not fugitive undefined shadows, born in a moment, and in a moment blotted from the soul, but are so many parts of the imperishable universe of morals so be" (*CS* 1:56) Thoughts and passions are the domain of the mind, though in later sermons the mind will be more closely associated with the body, while these ambiguous feelings that defy language of which the mind is barely perceptive have cosmic significance. Evanescent though they may seem, these affections are part of the fabric of the soul. They are of and by the spirit that the moral universe is made. This sermon is building up to the point that Emerson makes, that, "*every desire of the human mind, is a prayer uttered to God and registered in heaven*." (*CS* 1:57) Incantations and utterances are not essential to prayer. Desire is. Moreover, our religious affections have permanence. They are recorded in the spiritual world that, for the time being, remains hidden to man. It follows that the perfection of the soul is a matter of perceiving God, desiring what is his, and performing his will. For Emerson, this inner sense of the divine is the nature of human conscience.

Two of Emerson's early sermons find this evidence for God in the conscience, which binds mind and body together. First, in Sermon XXI, Emerson calls conscience a "divine Director"; whatever it ultimately may be—whether it be a faculty of moral sense or the product of human understanding—is not as important as the fact that the conscience acts to help determine what is good and what is evil. "That distinction," Emerson postulates, "was writ by the Eternal on the mind that is to live eternally" (*CS* 1:191). He notes that Socrates spoke of an "invisible Genius or Daemon" from which spoke "the voice of God" (*CS* 1:192). Likewise did Adam hear the voice of God and hide from it. Emerson, on the other hand, imagines the

conscience, as another Adam would, as "that man within the breast."[12] The division between body and soul, nature and spirit is not as clear. Meanwhile, conscience is yoked to one's eternal fate in both the story of Adam and Socrates's belief in the immortality of the soul, just as the body is bound to the spirit through conscience.

As this early sermon reveals, Emerson's understanding of the moral sense is close to that articulated by Unitarian self-culture. Ultimately, "the sentiment we call the Conscience," Emerson infers, "*includes a command to adopt or to reject*;—to perform one action, and to forbear another." (*CS* 1:191) Conscience is more than a moral feeling, it is an impulse to action. The teleology of conscience is, then, nothing short of "the moral government of the Universe" towards the perfection of each individual soul, "an immortal progress" as revealed by Jesus Christ (*CS* 1:195, 196). The conscience is not a passive but an active agent affecting the individual and the world; it is within one's control and it connects all of humanity. It follows that the existence of God can be intuited. "It seems to me an overpowering proof of the Being and government of God" (*CS* 1:195).

Sermon XXIII, like Sermon XXI before it, takes up the argument for God's existence. Mankind is caught up in the day-to-day experience of living and gives only so much time to the contemplation of divinity. But rather than descend into brutish darkness, there exists the "universality of the notion of God in the mind of the human race" (*CS* 1:204). Here, Emerson delves a bit more into the cosmological and ontological arguments before turning to the teleological: "Either the world came by *design*, that is, by God; or, it came *without design*, that is, by chance" (*CS* 1:205). The law of cause and effect and the "moral constitution of our minds" force the conclusion that the "great Order" is because of God. "It is because God is within us"

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[12] Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1856), 185.

(*CS* 1:206, 205). There is seeming chaos in natural phenomena and so-called acts of God, yet there is no chance in the beauty and goodness of life. Finally, the proof of God's existence can be found in personal experience. "It is the heart," says Emerson, "which is the seat of the evidence. The kingdom of God is within you. And there its evidence is best explored," in the human soul (*CS* 1:206).

Emerson reuses a number of the early sermons at a later point in his career, some after he publishes *Nature* in 1836. Sermon XLIII, given in 1829, is one of those sermons that accommodates his transition from Unitarianism to Transcendentalism. In it, Emerson defines religion as a personal perception of God. Nature was made subordinate to the mind or spirit where the perception of God is intuited. As Wesley Mott notes, "Sermon XLIII carries out the implications in a shift in Emerson's concept of the very grounds of religious belief, a shift that had been in the making for years. He was not rejecting science nor was he denying the importance of reason. He was simply and emphatically declaring what he had long held, that the personal experience of God 'reveals' the meaning of life and all human endeavor" (64).

The limitless potential of man, made known by Jesus Christ as divine messenger, is only possible, Emerson says, if one rightly perceives the enormity of "immortal progress" with humility (*CS* 1:196). The polarity in these early sermons reads like Unitarian jeremiads aimed at moral perfection, chastising those who neglect their sense of duty out of a moral complacency. That complacency is the result of one's false assurance in the immortality of the soul in a heavenly paradise, not recognizing that heaven for the Unitarian is a state of mind formed by one's moral character. Yet "this laxity," Emerson tells his brethren, "does not belong to true Christianity" (*CS* 2:20).

This punitive rejection of sinfulness in Sermon XLIII is the homiletic counterbalance to Emerson's more positive affirmations of human "connexion" with God (*CS* 2:21). He speculates,

> as the religious character is a development of the human mind, and not the fruit of external doctrines, it is not the particular speculations we run into about God's simple or twofold or threefold nature or about the preexistence of the Savior or about atonement and justification and conversion, it is not these that make the difference between men,—but something prior to all these and independent of all, namely the relation which the soul bears to God. (*CS* 2:20)

The formation of one's religious character is the result, not of theological doctrine, but "the relation which the soul bears to God,—a relation of the faculties and the affections, and so, of all the actions,—a relation so holy and natural and rapid that the poor fences of human sects are no barrier to it; are indifferent to it" (*CS* 2:20). The perception of the Deity by the moral sense is intuited by thought, feeling, and action in a way that is "holy and natural and rapid," superseding any understanding of denominational differences among the flocks of the faithful.

While the earlier sermons make the various arguments for God's existence, Sermon XLIII is, in part, a direct response to Paley's Watchmaker argument. Rather than be the children of a remote God some 6,000 years in the Biblical past, humanity is a part of an ever-present Creation and, thus, an ever-present Creator. Emerson states, with emphasis, "For Christianity is only the Interpreter of Natural Religion" (*CS* 2:20). Emerson does not discount the value of scripture here; in fact, his intention is just the opposite.[13] Revelation is not dependent on nature but on God. Paley's argument separates man and nature and removes God's active power. As

[13] Again, as Wesley Mott points out, "The sermon in part is an implicit response to recent criticism by Emerson's senior colleague at Second Church, Henry Ware, Jr.," that Emerson had not been giving enough attention to scripture in his sermons (62).

Emerson illustrates, “The artist who constructs a watch,” as opposed to the finder of such a watch, “avails himself of powers perpetually afforded by nature, that is, by God—as the force of gravity or the elasticity of steel” (*CS* 2:21). But, as Emerson reminds his audience, “God has no such powers out of himself.” An earlier analogy compares the “perception of God” to the magnetic attraction of a “loadstone” to “a heap of steel-filings,” that arrange themselves in order (*CS* 2:20). Likewise, “the moment the soul becomes aware of the presence of God—not by the hearing of the ear but by its own belief, all its knowledge, all its active powers throw themselves into irresistible arrangement, the riddle of human life is explained, and all things lose at once their solitary independent value and are thenceforward regarded in a new light as parts of God’s agency—nothing is insignificant, for every thing is a part of the might whole” (*CS* 2:21).
“It is a creation of each instant” (*CS* 2:21).

Sermon XLIII’s moral experience is also an aesthetic one. As in his early poem, “Each and All,” which he began composing in 1834, nothing is separate from God in the moral composition of the universe: “All are needed by each one; / Nothing is fair or good alone,” “Beauty through my senses stole; / I yielded myself to the perfect whole” (*JMN* IX:14, 25). The unity of all Creation with God is divine and beautiful. “God manifests himself in our own experience,” Emerson avows, and that in our “immediate connexion with the Deity” lay all the grandeur and beauty that is life: “Living in connexion with God, adopting his will, identifying the soul with him is *perfection*” (*CS* 2:22). Here Emerson makes the important distinction between a mechanistic Newtonian model of a universe of the “cold unintelligent Cause of the order of things” and “the Energetic Benefactor” that is God.

Emerson concludes by reaffirming the revelation that is the “God within us”: “Let us feel how grand and beautiful is this connexion of which we are made capable, this life within life,

this literal Emmanuel *God within us*. Every moment of virtuous endeavor will more and more open that inward revelation until the soul shall be filled with peace and joy and strength and zeal" (*CS* 2:24). The 'God within us' supplants empirical evidences of Christianity. Over the next two years, Emerson begins to speak more of the "inward revelation" as a spiritual affect.

By 1830, Emerson had begun preaching more about the nature of spirit and its relationship with God. Sermon LXVII, for example, which was delivered only a couple of times in February 1830 and once again in December 1831, considers the attributes of man's spiritual constitution. The text is from Job but Emerson draws heavily on the letters of St. Paul, particularly the verse from I Corinthians 3:16, "Ye are temples of the holy ghost," upon which Emerson makes the point that man is not merely "a twofold nature of body and of mind," but rather "that the spirit of God is in us" (*CS* 2:144). One such attribute of this is that men and women are "the interpreters and ministers of the Universe" (*CS* 2:146). That is, as he further illustrates in *Nature*, "the outward world seems only a mirror to reflect the thoughts of the soul" (*CS* 2:146).

Later, in September of that year, Emerson speaks again about the God within. In Sermon LXXXVIII, Emerson preaches the words of "the most affecting and fruitful truth that can be announced to us, God dwelleth with us, the Spirit of God is the spirit of man" (*CS* 2:252). Here Emerson expands on the text:

> There is in every human mind, however obscured or partially developed, a power greater than that mind; that we perceive that we are not our own; that we have no right to do whatsoever we please, but ought to obey this higher power, that the spiritual nature in us is of God, in his own likeness; and that when we exhibit great measures of goodness or wisdom it is not from ourselves that we are drawing, but from something deeper and

> vaster than man, that we are but cisterns and God is the fountain. Our spiritual nature is not something different from God's but is communicated from him, is a part of him, and a life of holiness consists in a continual effort at . . . the consummation of a more perfect union of our spirit with God. (*CS* 2:252)

"The Spirit of God," Emerson declares, "is the spirit of man" (*CS* 2:252). It is not until after the death of his first wife, Ellen, on February 8, 1831, that Emerson begins to sermonize more on spirit, attempting to define it. His young wife's death, which Emerson describes as a "grief sharpened into anguish by the 'complete wreck of earthly good,'" produced a sermon that reflects on the parting of "the spirit out of the body" and would assuage the fear of the grave with thoughts of the hereafter (*L* 1:318, *CS* 3:104). Despite one's loneliness and sorrow, "the Father of all Spirits who made him at first the gift of these affections, and of their objects, has not lost sight of his afflicted child" (*CS* 3:104). The souls of loved ones remain united through "the love of the same excellence, the love of truth and goodness—the love of God who is their source," their "connextions" growing stronger between heaven and earth (*CS* 3:105). A month later, Sermon CX considers "spiritual influences" in relation to the idea of God. Although Sermon CX was preached three times in 1831, it was one that Emerson saw fit to revisit twice in 1837. Emerson begins by parsing out some of the eighteen connotations of the word "spirit" found in the Bible. Included is the Holy Spirit and its "equivalent," according to Emerson, "the *mind of God*'" (*CS* 3:119). His infinite goodness and perfection is universal. God is present in miracles and inspiration and he is present "upon every mind in the Sanctification of the heart" (*CS* 3:121). "God is every where present and active," he says, "There is no life that is not received from him as long as it is life" (*CS* 3:121). Emerson attempts to refine his congregation's understanding of the Holy Spirit as an intermediary between them and God. "It is not that I wish to lower your

views of a part of the Spirit," he tells them, "but that I would make your views of the whole more sacred,"

> because I think the popular views on this head do harm by putting a medium; because it removes the idea of God one step further from the mind. It leaves some events, some things, some thoughts out of the power of him who causes every event, every power, every thought….Least of all can we believe that the presiding Deity commands all matter, and never descends into the secret chambers of the soul. There he is most present. The soul rules over matter. Matter may pass away like a mote in a sunbeam, may be absorbed into the immensity of God, as a mist is absorbed into the heat of the sun; but the soul is the kingdom of God, the abode of love, truth, and virtue. (*CS* 3:125)

The moral sense is thus "the Spirit of God"; all that is good in the individual is "the Power of God," and that in the "soul is the kingdom of God." There is no separation between God and man. Nor is there separation between God and the body. The act that would communicate this truth, the administration of the Lord's Supper, eventually drove a wedge between Emerson and his flock.

The Lord's Supper Controversy

By the spring of 1832, the junior minister of Second Church and Society, Boston, had been struggling with his vocation for some time prior to the spring of that year. Although he had previously defended the practice of communion as a symbol for a spiritual or internal process, he felt greater pressure to administer it at a time when Unitarians at large felt protective of their right to receive it. Emerson confides in his journal on June 2, 1832, "I have sometimes thought that in order to be a good minister, it was necessary to leave the ministry" (*JMN* IV:27). "The profession is antiquated. In an altered age, we worship in the dead forms of our forefathers. Were

not a Socratic paganism better that an effete superannuated Christianity?" Having submitted his letter to his church objecting to his administration of the Lord's Supper, Emerson expected to be asked for his resignation, but his congregation did not wish to part with their young minister.

In the middle of all the "moral excitement," facing his "hour of decision," Emerson took time to reflect in the summer of 1832—on his faith, his future, and the future of Christianity as well (*JMN* IV:27, 30). It was during this excursion that some of the central ideas of *Nature* and the Divinity School Address took shape.

The meetinghouse of the Second Church was undergoing several weeks of renovations, during which time Emerson took the opportunity to visit his Haskins relatives in Maine and explore the White Mountains of New Hampshire, in the company of his most trusted family members. The first was his skeptical brother, Charles, who had gone with him to Maine ten years before. Lately, Charles had been questioning the meaning of life and the hereafter. In a letter to his brother written earlier that year, Charles asks, "Who shall riddle me the how & the why? … If we are not immortals, all of life is wasted; & if we are, how much of it!"[14] A future state did not seem to promise much in way of compensation for the present. The spiritual did not, in his mind, correspond with the natural.

Emerson's other confidant on the journey was his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson. It was she who had recommended such a retreat, and who accompanied Emerson, after Charles left them at Fryeburg and returned to Boston, taking the bumpy road all the way to the foot of Mount Washington. It had been Mary's wish that her nephew stay on at Second Church for the sake of the society and not his own. Regardless of what she said, Emerson gave her no indication that he

[14] Charles Chauncy Emerson to Ralph Waldo Emerson, 2 February 1832. MH bMS Am 1280.226 (162); quoted in Ronald A. Bosco and Joel Myerson, *The Emerson Brothers: A Fraternal Biography in Letters* (2006), 167.

was to change his mind. A note that she left her nephew before returning home alone reads, "My solitude opens far distant views--& would see you climbing the h[ei]ghts of salvation thro' the lonely roads of what appears to you truth & duty."[15]

The retreat would give Emerson time to think about the authority that a personal religion might dictate. While passing through Conway, New Hampshire, on July 6, 1832, he reflects, "Here among the mountains the pinions of thought should be strong and one should see the errors of men from a calmer height of love and wisdom." Emerson was preaching in Fryeburg, Maine, that week, and he was thinking about the nature of religion. "Religion in the mind is not credulity & in the practice is not form," he affirms in his journal, "It is a life. It is the order & soundness of a man. It is not something else *to be got*[,] to be *added*[,] but is a new life of those faculties you have" (*JMN* IV:27). The problem, as Emerson tells the graduating class of Divinity College several years later, was that institutional Christianity was falling short of his ideal religion that was to renew the spirit of the individual. A week later, having reached his destination at Ethan Allen Crawford's inn, Emerson records the following entry:

> How hard to command the soul or to solicit the soul. Many of our actions[,] many of mine are done to solicit the soul. Put away your flesh[,] put on your faculties. I would think – I would feel. I would be the vehicle of that divine principle that lurks within & of which life has afforded only glimpses enough to assure me of its being. (*JMN* IV:28)

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[15] Mary Moody Emerson, *The Selected Letters of Mary Moody Emerson*, p. 318. For a more comprehensive account of the Maine and New Hampshire trip and the text of Mary Moody Emerson's note to Ralph Waldo Emerson after her departure, see Phyllis Cole, *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism* (1998), 217-219.

Emerson connects the "faculties" of intellect and emotion with a "divine principle" within. To "solicit the soul" one does not require the "flesh" or bread of the Lord's Supper but, rather, a form of spiritual discernment that would be more attentive to the movements of the moral sense.

The mountains were a place of deliberation and inspiration for Emerson. "The good of going into the mountains," he finds, "is that life is reconsidered; it is far from the slavery of your own modes of living…" (*JMN* IV:29). Emerson is rarely hyperbolic, though he is sometimes facetious or sarcastic, as he is here, expressing his desire for a career that would give him more autonomy and more financial stability. Still, his feeling that the labors of men, collar or no, might be a form of slavery indicates that slavery is still an abstraction for Emerson, sounding a lot like his future friend Thoreau. Or maybe it's just the mountain air talking. "He who believes in inspiration will come here to seek it. He who believes in the woodloving muses must woo them here. And he who believes in the reality of his soul will therein find inspiration & muses & God & will come out here to undress himself of pedantry & judge righteous judgment & worship the First Cause" (*JMN* IV:29).

Before departing, Emerson records his thoughts about the "perpetual celebration" that is the communion rite. "The Communicant celebrates on a foundation either of authority or of tradition an ordinance which has been the occasion to thousands,— I hope to thousands of thousands ,— of contrition, of gratitude, of prayer, of faith, of love, & of holy living," Emerson writes, adding "Far be it from any of my friends,— god forbid it be in my heart — to interrupt any occasion thus blessed of God's influences upon the human mind" (*JMN* IV:30). "But this ordinance is esteemed the most sacred of religious institutions & I cannot go habitually to an institution which they esteem holiest with indifference & dislike." He borrowed his brother's copy of William Sewel's *History of the Quakers* (1722), and read about George Fox's similar

misgivings about the Lord's Supper. He had also taken with him to New Hampshire the first two volumes of the three-volume *Portraiture of Quakerism* (1806) by Thomas Clarkson, which he withdrew from the Boston Athenaeum. He drew heavily upon these in preparation for his sermon addressing the Lord's Supper controversy.[16]

The soul searching of that early summer gave way to bodily suffering, an illness that may have been worsened by the stress of his vocational dilemma. Then, on September 9, 1832, Emerson finally explained to his congregation in the sermon for that Sunday the reasons for his objections to the Lord's Supper. The first part addressed the formalism of the communion rite. Emerson argued that "Jesus did not intend to establish institution for perpetual observance" in taking bread and wine at the Last Supper (*CS* 4:186). Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John may have kept it, and Paul may have approved, but the patristic tradition need not be maintained. "I think it was good for them," Emerson says; nevertheless, he adds, "I think it is not suited to this day" (*CS* 4:191).In Emerson's view, the rite distorts the relationship between God and the soul. True religion is internal, and Christ is internal. "If I understand the distinction of Christianity," Emerson ponders, "the reason why it is to be preferred over all other systems and is divine is this, that it is a moral system; that it presents men with truths which are their own reason, and enjoins practices that are their own justification" (*CS* 4:193). The Lord's Supper sermon, as Susan L. Roberson sees it, acts as a "metaphor, as it were, for the larger body-and-spirit controversy" with which Emerson was contending (208). As will be shown in the Divinity School Address, the Lord's Supper foreshadows the same tension between authority and conscience.

[16] For the Quaker background of the Lord's Supper sermon, see Frederick B. Tolles, "Emerson and Quakerism," *American Literature* 10 (May 1938): 142-65 and Mary C. Turpie, "A Quaker Source for Emerson's Sermon on the Lord's Supper," *New England Quarterly* 17 (March 1944): 95-101.

Once the vote was made by the proprietors of Second Church, Emerson handed in his resignation letter, to the disappointment of many in his congregation. That October, Emerson embraced his newfound freedom in his journal: "Has the doctrine ever been fairly preached of man's moral nature?" (*JMN* IV:45). Clearly not, and Emerson explains why. It is because that doctrine is not contained within "formal Christianity" but is "the essential truth, the heart of Christianity," which needs not be preached so much as teached. "Every teacher," he says, "when once he finds himself insisting with all his might upon a great truth turns up the ends of it at last with a cautious showing *how* it is agreeable to the life & teaching of Jesus — as if that was any recommendation. As if the blessedness of Jesus' life & teaching were not because they were agreeable to the truth" (*JMN* IV:45). Emerson then brings truth down—or up, really—to the level of Yankee wit, using proverbial phrases and semi-comic dialogue to satirize religious authority in the same way that Jesus himself used such devices to speak from his own authority.

> The truth of truth consists in this, that it is selfevident[,] selfsubsistent. It is light. You don't get a candle to see the sun rise. Instead of making Christianity a vehicle of truth you make truth only a horse for Christianity. It is a very operose way of making people good. You must be humble because Christ says, 'Be humble' 'But why must I obey Christ?' 'Because God sent him.' 'But how do I know God sent him?' 'Because your own heart teaches the same thing he taught.' Why then shall I not go to my own heart at first? (*JMN* IV:45).

To go to one's heart—and be humble about it—is the key. This is what Emerson preaches on October 21, 1832, in his final sermon before leaving Boston for Europe, his sermon on "the genuine man" (*CS* 4:201-208). By "trusting his own thoughts and following their guidance," "to follow the leading of his own mind like a little child," the genuine man becomes his own

authority, his own teacher, and follows in the example of Jesus. This, of course, is what Emerson means by "self-reliance," a term that shows up in Sermon CLXIV. Meanwhile, Emerson's "teacher" is announced in his Second Church Discourse which he delivers after returning to the United States. That same teacher will be looked for in his Divinity School Address several years later. But before that, Emerson searched out the doctrine of "man's moral nature" and learn what Nature had to teach.

"A Theory of Animated Nature"

What Emerson could not preach of man's original relation to the universe he eventually puts forth in *Nature*. Before this happens, Emerson leaves Boston to see the world outside of New England. On Christmas Day, 1832, Emerson set sail for a grand tour of Europe, traveling to Italy, Switzerland, France, England, and Scotland, over the next nine months. He had hoped traveling would revive him, both physically and spiritually. Indeed, it would. During his time spent in England, Emerson called on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Each was pleasant and courteous to the young American. Emerson then traveled to the uplands of Scotland where he had his fateful meeting his future friend and correspondent Thomas Carlyle.

Perhaps the most important event during Emerson's European tour was when Emerson walked through the Cabinet of Natural History in the Jardin des Plantes of Paris in July of 1833. There he saw beauty in the variety of nature's forms and saw in nature's beauty the beautiful truth of creation. "Whilst I stand there," he reports, "I am impressed with a singular conviction that not a form so grotesque, so savage, or so beautiful, but is an expression of something in man the observer" (*EL* I:10). Nature is a language, and Emerson realizes that it will be the work of Naturalists to both acquire and translate this language that communicates God's moral truth.

Upon his return to the United States, Emerson delivered a series of lectures that became important as early formulations of his aesthetic theory of nature. The first of which would be "The Uses of Natural History." Emerson says that, "If the opportunity is afforded him," that is, the naturalist, "he may study the leaves of the lightest flower that opens upon the breast of summer, in the faith that there is a meaning therein before whose truth and beauty all external grace must vanish, as it may be, all this outward universe shall one day disappear, when its whole sense hath been comprehended and engraved forever in the eternal thoughts of the human mind" (26). The meaning of the world, which reveals itself like the opening of a flower, is ultimately impressed upon the mind of man. This and the other lectures on science are scientific so far as they follow a methodology—a Swedenborgian style of interpretation influenced by Emerson's reading of Sampson Reed, which is more suited for reading scripture than for studying natural history.

The implicit, teleological argument for design stated in "The Uses of Natural History" is eventually what leads Emerson to ask "To what end is Nature?" in 1836. In the "Uses," Emerson expresses a sincere enthusiasm for the complexity that he sees around him, levels of organization and structure that suggest a divine principle at work in the universe. The problem with this vision of the cosmos is that it assumes a teleology, or an end to nature. It is an argument for design which assumes a Creation, the end of which is the revelation of God's moral excellence. And science has yet to prove God. Not only that but science assumes no end to nature. The problem of design forces Emerson to reckon with nature philosophically and not merely aesthetically, and it is what stops Emerson from pursuing a career in science and to turn instead to poetry and essays. By the time that Emerson prepares his little book on nature, he is more convinced than

ever that the most important discovery to be made in the study of natural history will be of the moral truth which lay in nature's beauty.

On May 6, 1834, after having so boldly declared that "I will be a naturalist," Emerson confides in his journal, "Well, my friend, are you not yet convinced that you should study plants and animals?" (*JMN* IV:290) He had begun to seriously doubt his plan, and before long, has a change of heart, and, once again, of vocation. He spends the next two years writing, if not "a scripture which contains the whole truth" (*JMN* IV:95), his "a theory of animated nature" (*JMN* IV: 288-89).[17]

In a notebook Emerson struggled to formulate what he called his "First Philosophy" in June 1835 (*JMN* V:50). That project, titled "The Mind," for which he culled journal passages from 1832 and 1834, made the June 1835 entry a starting point (*JMN* V:269-76). This might have become the planned companion volume to *Nature*, but ended up as material for future writings and prefiguring many of Emerson's recurrent themes. In *The American Scholar* address of 1837, given less than a year after the publication of *Nature*, Emerson remarks on the importance of nature on the mind: "The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature…. The scholar must needs stand wistful and admiring before this great spectacle. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him?" (*CW* I:54).[18] The First Philosophy "is the Science of what *is*, in distinction from what *appears*" (*JMN* V:270). Emerson, inspired by Francis Bacon and the Cambridge Platonists, tried to explain the relationship between mind and body, spirit and sense, the ideal and the actual. Just as the Earth is

[17] The line, "a scripture which contains the whole truth," was crossed out in Emerson's journal.

[18] The journal entries on "The Mind" were eventually used for the lecture on "Religion" and a miscellany of sorts for *The Dial* called "Senses and the Soul." A more practical use for these thoughts can be seen in Emerson's Divinity School Address.

found among a "deep thicket of spheres that compose the Milky Way," the mind finds itself in "the region of highest grandest Nature, namely, in union with the Supreme Being. It is one mark of them that their enunciation awakens the feeling of the Moral sublime, and *great men* are they who believe in them" (*JMN* V:270). Reason is of God, eternal and infinite. "To call the Reason 'ours' or 'human,' seems an impertinence, so absolute & unconfined it is. The best we can say of God, we mean of the mind as it is known to us." Echoing Jonathan Edwards on the will, Emerson proclaims there is in the New Testament "not a volition attributed to God Considered as an external cause, but gains in truth & dignity by being referred to the Soul." This last thought originates in an early entry dated August 19, 1832, a couple of months after Emerson gave his sermon on the Lord's Supper, and several months before he resigned his pulpit at the Second Church. Taken up again here, after he rejected a personal God, it speaks to Emerson's doctrine of the soul. His "First Philosophy" of 1835 becomes, by the summer of 1836, the basis for Emerson's *Nature*, which, as Harold Bloom once said, may have been titled "Man." To wit, Emerson's journal entry for July 30, 1836, reads, "Man is the point wherein matter & spirit meet & marry. The Idealist says, God paints the world around your soul. The spiritualist saith, Yea, but lo! God is within you. The self of self creates the world through you, & organizations like you. The universal central soul comes to the surface in my body" (*JMN* 5:187). This tension between the idealist and what Emerson calls the "spiritualist" is explored in more depth in *Nature* in which Emerson realizes the problem of subjectivity in what he envisions as a "true theory of nature & man" (*JMN* V: 182).

***Nature* and the Soul**

Emerson published *Nature* in September 1836. This, his first book, presents a progressive view about the unity of nature, God, and the soul. It was a bold challenge to what he saw as the

timidity of liberal Christianity and American speculative thought in general. It is fair to say that this same boldness characterizes the intellectual thrust of the Transcendentalist movement that year. Yet of the many volumes that were published during this *annus mirabilis* of the Transcendentalist movement, Emerson's book stands out. Unlike the other books that were published that year by Orestes Brownson, George Ripley, and William Henry Furness, among others, which address themselves to the issues of revelation, inspiration, and authority in Christianity, Emerson's work deemphasizes Christianity and instead "bears personal witness to core truths about the self and the world, consciousness and nature" (Richardson, *Emerson* 226). Rather than sermonize about the moral sentiment or internalize Christianity, Emerson would by a philosophical examination of nature posit the truth about spirit, for it was in spirit that Emerson could find a principle of unity that seemed to be absent in the traditions of materialism and idealism.

Nature, then, is an attempt to restore unity, to recover what is lost when the belief in a personal God is challenged by the secularizing forces of natural science, Biblical history, and philosophical idealism. *Nature*, David M. Robinson argues, replaced any supernatural belief in Emerson's moral system and became "the factor to which he turned for conformation of his own moral sense" (*Apostle of Culture* 78). A close reading of Emerson's *Nature* reveals this devotional character, this scripture for the spirit.[19] To that end, one might say, as Julie Ellison has, that "*Nature* is an investigation of theory," a theory of the unity of nature, its causes and effects (85). Thusly considered, Emerson's *Nature* takes the form of a practical scripture—part

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[19] David M. Robinson rightly describes *Nature* as a devotional text. See David M. Robinson, *Apostle of Culture: Emerson as Preacher and Lecturer* (1982), 86-87.

poetry, part philosophy, part prophecy—for the rapidly changing, increasingly secular nineteenth century.

It begins by diagnosing the world's weakened spiritual condition. The problem, much like Emerson's own physical malady, is one of vision. "Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers" (*CW* I:7). Immediately, Emerson evokes an idea of time perceived with the sense of vision, to see an "age" that is larger in scope than any individual, imagined as part of a progression. Yet there is too much looking backwards. The age that would come to be identified with industrialization is one Emerson sees as being defined by a kind of hero worship in literature. The minds of the present age look to the past in vain as the source of inspiration; they commemorate with "biographies, histories, and criticism" not the prophets, as it were, but the "fathers," an allusion to those fathers who Jesus in Luke 11:47 accuses of having "killed" the prophets.[20] Likewise, Emerson's criticism finds fault in the Pharisees of his day who further remove humanity from the source. "The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we through their eyes." There is a God in Emerson's universe, on equal ground with a nature, both of which humanity has the power to observe.

Humanity needs a hero of the spirit, a poet-prophet. Instead of second-hand revelation, Emerson asks, "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?" Emerson is the poet-prophet of this newness, of the spiritual philosophy, the seer who can restore humanity's vision of itself by revelation. An "original relation" is possible, Emerson says, by moving beyond one's historical consciousness and into the universality of the soul. Yet one cannot completely abandon the self without losing the

[20] "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them."

substance which gives life meaning. That substance is spirit, accessed by means of an expanded concept of the moral sense.

Nature assumes that humanity suffers from its disenchantment with the old religion; the cure is to be found in the spirit, the perennial newness and renewal that nature ministers to man. "Embosomed for a season in nature" are we, reversing the earlier image of entombment with one of maternal love "whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature." Instead of returning nature's nurturing love and tenderness, a disengaged humanity draws power from it and takes action. Likewise, Emerson revitalizes images from scripture, giving them a new agency. Rather than "grope among the dry bones of the past," one is imbued with the same creative power found in organic forms of life, the spirit that continually renews nature with life: "The sun shines to-day also."[21] This eternal renewal—"new lands, new men, new thoughts"—is to be experienced directly. The ultimate authority, whether one calls it God or not, is within. "Let us demand our own works and laws and worship," for one need only appeal to the freedom of one's own nature.

Emerson finds reenchantment where one may have thought inspiration was exhausted. Here he turns to the language of natural theology as a way to interpret both material and human nature. The prophecy of nature is that the mystery of "the creation" has only begun to reveal itself. No questions are "unanswerable," nor must one rely on the authority of scripture for answers, for "nature is already, in its forms and tendencies, describing its own design." Introducing the terms "creation" and "design," Emerson restores a telos to a natural world that has been stripped of it. He continues, "Every man's condition is a solution in hieroglyphic to those inquiries he would put. He acts it as life, before he apprehends it as truth." The intellect

[21] Cf., Ezekiel 37:2-5; Ecclesiastes 1:5.

cannot decipher a meaning for life that has not already been realized by the active powers, a meaning that is individual, personal.

At last, Emerson proposes that we "interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us," putting to question, "to what end is nature?" Implied in his question is the belief that the world is phenomenal. Light is reflected into the eye wherein the mind creates the world around it. The "abstract truth" which will be "most practical" to know here may be a form of idealism, but Emerson does not commit fully to that or any other theory. It is, at the very least, about how man is affected by nature and how man affects nature, physically and metaphysically.

What follows is not Emerson's theory of nature, or an ode to nature, but rather a series of fragmentary discoveries of nature and how they become affectively unified in spirit. To be sure, the first five chapters originally took shape in "The Uses of Natural History." They establish the various ways that man is the beneficiary of nature's bounty. This time, however, Emerson searches for an answer to the question of "end" in the eternal ascension of the soul. Yet human culture, an extension of nature, is not merely a grand cipher waiting to be discovered and interpreted, as is the typological logic of natural history, nor does it merely serve man in the business of "commodity." Like the "Rhodora," "Beauty is its own excuse for being," but it is not the only source of meaning in nature (*CW* IX:79). A more satisfying answer may lie in a theory of "language," or ultimately the moral "discipline" like that of self-culture, but even those uses of nature are limited.

While the first five chapters are accounts of nature, the final three chapters—"Idealism," "Spirit," and "Prospects"— Emerson had planned to publish in a separate volume titled "Spirit." Perhaps he realized later that it implied a dualism that was not there. He could have insisted on the distinction which he first made in "Pray without Ceasing," that of a world divided between

matter and spirit. But *Nature* blurs this Coleridgean distinction in its examination of the outer and inner worlds.[22] Emerson hypothesizes that spirit exists in a more complex relationship, oscillating between nature and the soul. This eternal, affective movement, perceived as an alternating descension and ascension over time, is ultimately how one can know God.

The philosophy of *Nature* is not natural so much as it is moral. The moral problem being considered is a self-consciousness perceived as separate from the world. Emerson states, "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul" (*CW* I:8). Nature is the "NOT ME," which contains "all that is separate from us" including one's own body. Man's condition since the Fall has been one of separation. Emerson internalizes this Biblical condition as the self being separate from the body. Identity presumably resides in the subjectivity of the "soul" or the "mind," which through its physical and moral senses perceives its own separateness. He does not, however, define the soul as the "ME" or the subject. Emerson's revelation is found in the place where nature ends and the soul begins. This polar unity meets in spirit.

The first chapter after the introduction, itself titled "Nature," describes self-consciousness as a profound solitude. Emerson describes how this profundity steals over oneself when pondering the inaccessible beauty of the stars: "One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime" (*CW* I:8). Importantly, the product of this cosmic loneliness is a religious affection: "If the star should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore" (*CW* I:8-9). Instead, man walks the "streets of cities" and through the "City of God," not "one night in

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[22] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "My words are Spirit: and they (i.e. the spiritual powers expressed by them) are Truth." John 6:63, quoted in *Aids to Reflection* (1829), 407.

a thousand years" but every day, making possible a millennial consciousness of one's place in the creation. As Daniel Malachuk points out, "Emerson urges his readers to recognize how the city of God—accessible to us simply by looking into the night sky—is not loved by us as something other than the world but precisely because it can illuminate our condition here in the world if we only open our eyes" (44).

Emerson then turns his attention back to the earth where the experience of cosmic "reverence" leads to feelings of a "kindred impression" (*CW* I:9). In doing so, Emerson moves from the mythological and the theological, in the traditions of the Greeks and St. Augustine, to the poetical and philosophical after Coleridge and Wordsworth. The former is a religious self-transcendence in contemplating the "design" of the cosmos; the latter is a romantic self-consciousness distinguished by its "poetical sense." To be affected by nature is to reconnect with the paradise of one's own sacred, child-like state. The awe the moral imagination feels in the presence of "the flowers, the animals, the mountains" is equal to that of the Wordsworthian wisdom of the "wisest man" and the delight felt in the "simplicity of his childhood" (*CW* I:9). The result is a feeling of "reverence" that approaches worship in the contemplation of the wonders of nature "when the mind is open to their influence," bringing about a union of thought and feeling, wisdom and joy, and the child within the man—the affective realization of the soul. "The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child," Emerson says, that "The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood." Here and elsewhere, Emerson appeals to virtuous manhood throughout *Nature*, identifying it both with an idealized child and against what he deems a weak "effeminacy."[23]

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[23] By charging some men with "effeminacy," Emerson expresses a sexist sentiment deemed permissible by the standards of his day.

Where one may perceive the Cartesian self as separate consciousnesses in time, Emerson sees the Platonic unity of the soul. To do this, Emerson retreats into either a primeval state or sacred innocence. This is also a retreat from a secular world into one that integrates the whole of a person's being. Emerson separates his poet from the activity of commerce associated with cities and the business of agriculture elsewhere, to find a religious solitude where one can appreciate nature's beauty. When Emerson admires a "charming landscape," for example, he notes the many farms that have divided up the landscape into realty. While "Miller," "Locke," and "Manning" are working their farms, the Yankee poet feels a bit insecure about his vocation, perhaps a bit guilty for not laboring. His use for nature is child-like in comparison to other men. Yet it is the poet who is capable of unifying heaven and earth (and one's own identity) in a literal horizon of meaning. "There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts," Emerson declares. "This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title." Nature needs not end in commodity. It has a higher value that is seen only from the vantage of a poetic consciousness.

"Crossing a bare common," he moves through the landscape—not the English countryside of the Lake Poets but the cold, darkening, puritanical New England winter—where he finds himself enjoying "a perfect exhilaration" (*CW* I:10). There is, nevertheless, something dangerous about this enthusiasm: "Almost I fear to think how glad I am." Here is where Emerson has his famous epiphany about becoming a "transparent eyeball." But before that happens, his thoughts enter the woods.

> In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees

> not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befal me in life,— no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. (*CW* I:10)

In contrast to the pastoral landscape of farmland, Emerson imagines a sylvan idyll of restorative power and life eternal that exists for him and him alone.

He then returns from the woods where,

> Standing on the bare ground, — my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, — all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. (*CW* I:10)

The "bare common" has become the "bare ground," as Emerson moves out of the Puritan history of the Commonwealth and into an eternal state of consciousness. And there, of course, is the familiar figure of transparency.[24] The ascent to God is a transformation, one that in a literal sense is absurd. The seer becomes a fantastic physical being, not unlike the eyes of Plotinus, that exist only as organs of sight. Yet if we mock the silliness of a "transparent eyeball," we miss the point that Emerson makes, which is that embodied consciousness is a strange relationship between matter and spirit. Ascension into the divine means separating oneself from an attachment to "mean egotism," resulting in one's alienation not just from the body but from one's idea of self.

The mystic transformation of the self to pure consciousness comes at a cost. The "name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental," Emerson professes, "be brothers, to be acquaintances, — master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance." This dissolution of social

[24] Merton M. Sealts, Jr., describes the transparency trope as part of "the process of learning to see man and nature as they exist beyond the realm of the senses" (72). For more, see the section on "Transparence and Opacity" in *Emerson on the Scholar* (1992), 67-73.

bonds is, in another sense, disturbing, almost tragic. Perhaps this was what Emerson found so fearful about the experience, to no longer identify with the economic and social order that appears alien to his understanding and not, in this moment, a reflection of man's relationship with the divine. "I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty," Emerson exclaims. "In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature." Another way to think about the detachment Emerson describes is one logical end to liberal Christianity, wherein existence becomes a kind of radical egalitarianism where oneness with "Universal Being" reduces humanity to an intuitive essence without personhood.

The chapter on "Nature" ends not on this note of strange ecstasy but of sober reflection. The enchantment passes. The mystic experience is only temporary; his feet never really leave the "ground." Nature that was "the frolic of the nymphs" yesterday becomes "melancholy today." As Ralph L. Rusk puts it, this is how Emerson "repeatedly alternate[s] otherworldliness with matter-of-factness," here and throughout *Nature* (240). The fantasy of mystical union with the divine in Emerson's transformation into a "transparent eye-ball" separates the soul from the self, which is, in a literal sense, unnatural. Emerson tempers his enthusiasm, saying that "the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both." The soul in harmony with nature cannot be separate from the self. It is that "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit." Man is like Carlyle's tailor who clothes the world with his subjectivity, through which he simultaneously creates and experiences the Eternal Mind. Delight in nature is as real as the heroic "sadness" of the "man laboring under calamity" (*CW* I:10) or the tragic sense of "him who has just lost by death a dear friend" (*CW* I:11). After a moment of celestial transcendence, Emerson falls back to earth: "The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the

population." The analogy is to a kind of spiritual foreclosure that contemptuously reduces human tragedy to economic metaphor.

The Uses of *Nature*

The chapters that follow represent ascending orders of nature.[25] The journal for March 27 and 28, 1836, contains an outline for these first chapters: "Thus through Nature is there a striving <for> upward. Commodity points to a greater good. Beauty is nought until the spiritual element. Language refers to that which is to be said[.]…Finally; Nature is a discipline, & points to the pupil & exists for the pupil. Her <nature> being is subordinate; his is superior" (*JMN* V:146, 147). More significantly, Emerson concludes that these uses constitute a new religion, a true religion of spiritual ascension intuited by one's sense of being in nature. "In these Uses of Nature which I explore," Emerson says, "the common sense of Man requires that, at last, Nature be referred to the Deity, be viewed in God….Shall I say then that a several use of Nature is Worship?" (*JMN* V:149).

The first of nature's uses is "Commodity." "All men apprehend" nature as commodity, though, in the words of George Herbert, we do not know the extent to which nature attends to us: "More servants wait on man / Than he'll take notice of." The religious tradition of Herbert speaks to a reverence for the Creation. At the same time, "A man is fed, not that he may be fed, but that he may work." This latter, Winthrop-sounding rhetoric appeals to the sensibilities of both laboring and mercantile classes, those who pride themselves on their Puritan work ethic.[26] Still, the metaphysical poetry of the previous lines points to the example of Herbert, whose

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[25] Cf., the epigraph to the second edition of *Nature* (1849): "And, striving to be man, the worm / Mount though all the spires of form."

[26] See Thomas D. Birch, "Toward a Better Order: The Economic Thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson," *The New England Quarterly*, 68:3 (Fall 1995): 385–401.

poems were written in the same devotional spirit as Emerson's *Nature*. Emerson translates Herbert's verse as follows:

> Nature, in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result. All the parts incessantly work into each other's hands for the profit of man. The wind sows the seed; the sun evaporates the sea; the wind blows the vapor to the field; the ice, on the other side of the planet, condenses rain on this; the rain feeds the plant; the plant feeds the animal; and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man. (*CW* I:11)

Man can never outspend nature's "divine charity," given by the eternally attending spirit or in Emerson's image of the "endless circulations." If applied right, man can harness nature's power by technology. At one pole there is Noah, the man redeemed who obeys God's command to save Creation; at the other is Napoleon who made the world bend to his individual will. Somewhere in between is the "private poor man" enjoying the conveniences of modernity.

Emerson returns to Herbert's "Man" at the end of *Nature*. In the meantime, a "nobler want of man is served" in nature's beauty, or rather "the love of Beauty" (*CW* I:12). The same ability to integrate the self is found in "the plastic power of the human eye" (*CW* I:12) that forms by making the world conform to the eye's will.[27] Nature is, in one aspect, a "delight" that rejuvenates and satisfies the soul's desire for beauty: "the active enchantment reaches my dust, and I dilate and conspire with the morning wind" (*CW* I:13). "Give me health and a day," Emerson says, "and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." Another aspect is in the "higher…spiritual element" (*CW* I:15). Emerson finds beauty in heroism, especially in the sacrifices of Leonidas and Arnold Winkelried, and the persecution of Sir Harry Vane and Lord

[27] Cf., Coleridge, "esemplastic power" in *Biographia Literaria* (1834).

Russell. Jesus is but one name in a larger (Eurocentric) historical arc in which individual virtue comes to be associated with larger geographies. Finally, in a third aspect, Emerson finds beauty in the intellect. “The beauty of nature reforms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation,” he affirms. An increasing humanism is evident in Emerson’s appreciation of beauty, one that praises the virtue of individual liberty over that of a tyrannical conformity or “pomp.”

“Beauty” leads Emerson into the subject of “Language.” Theories about the natural origin of language became a popular pursuit in the early-nineteenth century. Emerson’s theory is that on a fundamental level all language is derived from nature. “Language” is more important, perhaps, as it is where Emerson states in his own way Emanuel Swedenborg’s concept of correspondence, that the facts of the natural world correspond to some fact of moral or divine purpose.[28] Simply stated, “1. Words are signs of natural facts 2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts 3. Nature is the symbol of spirit.”

God reveals himself through the language of nature. “The world is emblematic,” Emerson says,

> Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass. ‘The visible world and the relation of its parts, is the dial plate of the invisible.’ The axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics. (*CW* I:21)

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[28] Emerson was indirectly influenced by Swedenborg’s ideas through Sampson Reed. Like Swedenborg, Reed understood nature as a language. The most important idea that Reed has to share with Emerson is that of the mind, and the activities of the mind, as evidence of the soul. And science may be a way to prove the existence of the soul. In his *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* (1826), Reed asks, “Is there aught in science to add strength and dignity to the human mind? The natural world is only the body, of which she is the soul.” Reed inspired Emerson to look for the soul in the mind. He also raises an interesting question of how the body of the natural world creates not just one mind but Mind, and by extension, the Soul.

"This densely allusive passage," as Laura Dassow Walls points out, combines a quotation from Emmanuel Swedenborg that Emerson records in his journal after climbing Mount Washington that summer of 1832, preceded by an allusion to Francis Bacon, and followed by a paraphrasing of Madame De Staël (*Emerson's Life in Science* 48). Religion, science, and philosophy confirm Emerson's belief in the correspondence of the mind with nature. "This relation between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poet, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men. It appears to men, or it does not appear." Emerson's idea of inspiration does not involve special grace but is a personal revelation of physical and moral nature, "for the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own, shines through it" (*CW* I:22). This genius is found in those who look for it; and only those who look can begin to realize this vision:

> There sits the Sphinx at the road-side, and from age to age, as each prophet comes by, he tries his fortune at reading her riddle. There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali, preëxist in necessary Ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of preceding affections, in the world of spirit. A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world. (*CW* I:22)

The "necessity" is the answer to this riddle of meaning, of why nature *is*. It must, Emerson suggests, contain within it the language with which to interpret itself. Emerson quotes Elizabeth Peabody's translation of Guillaume Oegger: "'Material objects,' said a French philosopher, 'are necessarily kinds of *scoriæ* of the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature must have a spiritual and moral side.' This doctrine is abstruse," Emerson says, and defers to his favorite quote by George Fox: "'Every scripture is to be interpreted by the same spirit which gave it forth,'—is the

fundamental law of criticism." Or perhaps the ancient concept of *libris mundi* makes more sense? And then is it Coleridge? No, Goethe, who proposes how "every object rightly seen, unlocks a new faculty of the soul."[29] At bottom is Emerson's understanding of Swedenborgian correspondence, which he wrote in his journal at the moment of intellectual confluence: "I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or real" (*JMN* IV:331).

These several uses of nature—"Commodity," "Beauty," "Language"—are all subordinate to "Discipline." Moral discipline is moral education. The highest of the "uses," it takes the whole of nature and gives "sincerest lessons, day by day, whose meaning is unlimited" (*CW* I:23). Emerson describes two different forms of discipline. The first is an "understanding in intellectual truths," with emphasis on the understanding. The second sense is of nature as a moral discipline with recourse to reason. "Every property of matter is a school for the understanding," while, "Reason transfers all these lessons into its own world of thought, by perceiving the analogy that marries Matter and Mind."

Nature is unyielding in her discipline. Nature "pardons no mistakes," Emerson says, invoking the words of Christ: "Her yea is yea, and her nay, nay" (*CW* I:24).[30] To put it another way, "nature's dice are always loaded" (*CW* I:25). He quotes this line from Sophocles more accurately in "Compensation," "The dice of God are always loaded." Here, Emerson does not simply conflate God with nature. He is saying that nature may appear to be a game of chance in the absolute but the game is fixed—not in a pessimistic sense but by a faith-filled optimism.

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[29] This quotation has often been attributed to Samuel Taylor Coleridge but is a restatement of Goethe: "Der Mensch kennt nur sich selbst, insofern er die Welt kennt, die er nur in sich und sich nur in ihr gewahr wird. Jeder neue Gegenstand, wohl beschaut, schließt ein neues Organ in uns auf." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke* (1828-1833), 36:264.

[30] Cf., Matthew 5:37.

Here one can intuit Emerson coming to terms with the recent and sudden loss of his brother Charles who could be that kind of pessimist foil to his older brother's optimist. Be that as it may, "the laws of physics" present themselves to a calm and genial mind that can appreciate the wisdom of nature. "What noble emotions dilate the mortal as he enters into the counsels of the creation, and feels by knowledge the privilege to BE!" (*CW* I:25).

"Discipline," having switched places from where it was in the original "Uses" with that of "Language," is partly a restatement of the doctrine of correspondence. "All things are moral," he says, "and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature." This spiritual symmetry touches upon the theme of Herbert's "Man." "Nature is thoroughly mediate. It is made to serve," that "More and more, with every thought, does his kingdom stretch over things, until the world becomes, at last, only a realized will,—the double of man" (*CW* I:25). Emerson envisions the thought of man enlarging to the mind of God. In it, Emerson makes the observation that "every natural process is but a version of a moral sentence" (*CW* I:26). In all of this, one finds the moral law. "The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process" (*CW* I:26). Discipline instructs the moral sentiment, though nature still has yet to answer the question of its own being.

***Nature* and Spirit**

The question remains to be answered, "To what end is Nature?" (*CW* I:7). "Thus," the chapter on "Idealism" begins, "is the unspeakable but intelligible and practicable meaning of the world conveyed to man, the immortal pupil, in every object of sense" (*CW* I:29). Emerson implies that the significance of nature is it conveys meaning through the physical senses and the common sense. But is this all there is to nature? "A noble doubt perpetually suggests itself,"

Emerson asks, "whether this end be not the Final Cause of the Universe; and whether nature outwardly exists" (*CW* I: 29). Then, having spent several chapters celebrating the uses of nature, Emerson surprises the reader with his seeming avowal of his idealism.

Emerson finds some usefulness in idealism. Then again, "what difference does it make…?" (*CW* I:29). This question of relevance is repeated again with regard to the relations of all space and time. "Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me," Emerson makes clear, "Be it what it may, it is ideal to me so long as I cannot try the accuracy of my senses" (*CW* I:29). Should one insist on the common sense, which does not try the accuracy of sense perception,

The "Uses," it will be remembered, ended in self-expression, of a God whose Creation was its own being reflected back unto him. Yet why go to the trouble of Creation, asks the idealist. Why can't it just be a dream in God's mind? Emerson's answer is that while we may not know what substance that dreaming takes, "God never jests with us, and will not compromise the end of nature, by permitting any inconsequence in its procession," that "so long as the active powers predominate over the reflective, we resist with indignation any hint that nature is more short-lived or mutable than spirit" (*CW* I:29, 30). The dimensionality, the "permanence" or the "absolute existence of nature" (*CW* I:30) cannot be doubted; at the same time, "It is the uniform effect of culture on the human mind, not to shake our faith in the stability of particular phenomena, as of heat, water, azote; but to lead us to regard nature as phenomenon, not a substance;" and thus, "to attribute necessary existence to spirit; to esteem nature as an accident and an effect" (*CW* I:30).

What nature ultimately is not the question here. What nature is for is the question. The answer, of course, is being. Spirit, Emerson says, must exist if nature is phenomenal, as there

must be some substantial dimension of experience that, even if it exists outside of our everyday consciousness, may have a plane of existence of its own. That said, Emerson believes one can access these higher realms through the action of thought, of "Reason." The "despotism of the senses" is undone by the "effects of culture," the first of which being that "Nature is made to conspire with spirit to emancipate us" (*CW* I:30). In like manner, the poet and the philosopher, as well as science, religion, and ethics, all reveal to man the spiritual laws of the universe. This freeing of the mind commences with thought, in both the poetic imagination as much as the philosophical intellect. "The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts," or, to put it another way, the poet derives joy from the ideas of things that in themselves give the sensual man pleasure (*CW* I:31). The soul's progress is a poetic action of interpreting the world. And for the poetic soul, "whilst the world is a spectacle, something in himself is stable" (*CW* I:31). This kind of perception "enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul" (*CW* I:33). Emerson exemplar is Shakespeare, the poet who "subordinates" nature, the poet who is capable of "transfiguration" (*CW* I:31, 32). The poet is not a maker but a creator, like Prospero, delighting in his power to create the world by his will.

Foregoing any and all ends to nature, the end of the soul is ascension, the progress of being toward the perfection of the Supreme Being. To ascend, however, the soul requires cultivation. And to cultivate the moral sense requires a teacher. Several individuals come to be represented as the great teachers in this chapter on "Idealism," poets and philosophers included. In comparing the poet to the philosopher, Emerson remarks that "one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth," which makes them, by the logic of Romanticism, one and the same: "The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which

is beauty, is the aim of both" (*CW* I:33, 33-34). The function of these teachers is to find the corresponding idea to the thing. Thereby, "the material is degraded before the spiritual" (*CW* I:34).

It must be then that the end of nature is a corresponding ascension. "Whilst we wait in this Olympus of gods," Emerson contemplates that, "we think of nature as an appendix to the soul. We ascend into their region, and know that these are the thoughts of the Supreme Being" (*CW* I:34). The result is that, "no man touches these divine natures, without becoming, in some degree, himself divine."

> Like a new soul, they renew the body. We become physically nimble and lightsome; we tread on air; life is no longer irksome, and we think it will never be so. No man fears age or misfortune or death in their serene company, for he is transported out of the district of change. Whilst we behold unveiled the nature of Justice and Truth, we learn the difference between the absolute and the conditional or relative. We apprehend the absolute. As it were, for the first time, *we exist.* We become immortal, for we learn that time and space are relations of matter; that with a perception of truth or a virtuous will they have no affinity. (*CW* I:34-35)

The discovery that "*we exist*"—an unhappy "Fall" in Emerson's later estimation—or that man has self-consciousness, that one can know oneself as if going outside one's self and knowing the solipsistic impossibility of such, this knowing is a step upward that is ascension in life, prefiguring additional steps in a future state.[31]

[31] "It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made, that we exist. That discovery is called the Fall of Man." Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience," *CW* III: 43.

This is not to say that the spiritual is the end of being. Emerson makes the point that "religion and ethics" have the capacity for "degrading nature and suggesting its dependence on spirit," instead of understanding their mutual dependance on one another (*CW* I:35). "They both put nature under foot," such as, in the words of St. Paul, "'The things that are seen, are temporal; the things that are unseen, are eternal,' that "It puts an affront upon nature" (*CW* I:35).[32] Nor is it exactly fair to say "that all culture tends to imbue us with idealism" (*CW* I:35). "I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it," Emerson says, adding the whimsical visual, "I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons" (*CW* I:35). Life, the experience of living through time, consists in a kind of indeterminacy. Emerson maintains that "the object of human life" is to realize "man's connexion with nature" (*CW* I:35-36). That object is alternatively natural and spiritual. Now the question is, if nature is phenomena, what then is spirit?

The penultimate chapter on "Spirit" describes spirit as an extension of the uses of nature in two separate analogies. What is "essential," Emerson professes, "to a true theory of nature and man," is that it advance an idea about the essence of things (*CW* I:36). "Uses that are exhausted or that may be, and facts that end in the statement, cannot be all that is true of this brave lodging wherein man is harbored," there must be some account of cause and meaning in the universe (*CW* I:36-37). That which Emerson calls spirit is itself substanceless yet substantive: "It suggests the absolute. It is a perpetual effect. It is a great shadow pointing always to the sun behind us" (*CW* I:37). Man is the gnomon on the face of nature's dial, casting a shadow that reveals its relation to the celestial light. Like the *via negativa* of shadow, the apprehension of spirit can only indicate divine power, while the mind comprehends its moral nature in degrees of time.

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[32] 2 Corinthians 4:18.

Turning from this secular metaphor of spirit, Emerson's next analogy is decidedly more religious. "The aspect of nature is devout," he says. "Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast." The "figure," and not the person, of Jesus, as distinguished from Christ, is made a simile of faith, proceeding in a conceit established earlier. Not only that but the mythologized "figure of Jesus" is described in a posture of humility, a humility of the head and heart that Emerson renders as female. The lowering of the head bends the individual to the will of God, while the folding of the hands acknowledges the presence of the God within. Nature complements the humanity of Jesus in this way, showing quiet reverence to the power of God. If in this relationship of human and divine, man is the image and glory of God, Emerson implies that women are of the same image and glory. Emerson contradicts himself here as earlier he denigrated the quality of "effeminacy" when it appears in men where here the female is reverent. Nevertheless, the image he renders is one of devout worship that represents the affective action of spirit upon the individual, which Emerson later asserts for man and woman.[33]

These inexhaustible uses of secular intellect and religious devotion combine to create the worshipful contemplation of spirit in nature. Of the spirit, Emerson so far says only what it is like, though he cannot say what it is in its own immaterial being: "Of that ineffable essence which we call Spirit, he that thinks most, will say least. We can foresee God in the course, and, as it were, distant phenomena of matter; but when we try to define and describe himself, both language and thought desert us, and we are as helpless as fools and savages." The ineffability of spirit is a problem of scale, so it would seem. The spirit defies explanation, yet "when man has worshipped him intellectually," Emerson says, nature becomes the oracle, it is "the organ

[33] 1 Corinthians 11:7.

through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it."

The challenges materialism poses to a conception of spirit Emerson answers by questioning, in the manner of Bishop Berkeley, the assumptions of materialism. "Three problems are put by nature to the mind: What is matter? Whence is it? and Whereto?" In answer to his first question, "What is matter?" Emerson refers back to the Ideal Theory. We only know what we perceive to be. Material things are ideas of the mind. "Yet, if it only deny the existence of matter," Emerson contends that "it does not satisfy the demands of the spirit. It leaves God out of me" (*CW* I:37). The affective experience of being needs an object, God or spirit. Emerson continues, "It leaves me in the splendid labyrinth of my perceptions, to wander without end. Then the heart resists it, because it balks the affections in denying substantive being to men and women" (*CW* I:37-38). To what use, then, is perception or affections, asks Emerson, if all is an idea in the mind of God? Berkeleyan idealism does not admit a God within; Emerson does. Furthermore, idealism denies the unity that Emerson sees as fundamental to man, the unity represented in both man and woman, but is a "useful introductory hypothesis" for "the eternal distinction between the soul and the world" (*CW* I:38). As from where or to what end is matter, Emerson speculates that the alpha and omega of ultimate cause and effect of material nature is a God who represents a great unifying theory behind the whole of the creation.

The "Supreme Being" that is spirit is accessible by means of virtue, which Emerson, quoting Milton, describes as "The golden key / which opes the palace of eternity" (*CW* I:38). More to the point, virtue is an affect that, Emerson declares, "animates me to create my own world through the purification of my soul" (*CW* I:38). This is where "Spirit" finds its conclusion, in the world. "The world," Emerson says, "proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It

is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious," adding that it is the "human will" that distinguishes the body from the "serene order" of "inviolable" nature (*CW* I:38, 39). Nature, while seeming less inviolable these days, acts as the "expositor of the divine mind." This is as close as Emerson come s to saying that Nature capitalized is the moral teacher of man. It therefore generates the will toward the contemplation of virtue in the individual who sees nature in a moral way. Emerson emphasizes this final point in "Spirit" by deprecatingly undercutting himself by returning to the image of the poet who feels insecure "until he is out of the sight of men" (*CW* I:39). The world created in the mind of the poet is at odds with the world of labor and economy. What Emerson says by contrast is that the material world of the industrial age, however more practical it assumes itself to be, is no more practical than the world of the visionary. It just depends upon one's epistemology.

Nature concludes with "Prospects" in which Emerson expands on "the laws of the world and the frame of things" in a prophetic vision that sees the creation of a new earth through an apocalypse of mind (*CW* I:39). Having ascended through the various uses of and theorized about nature and spirit, the time has come to answer the question, "to what end is nature?" (*CW* I: 3) So far, it would appear that "Empirical science is apt to cloud the sight, and by the very knowledge of functions and processes to bereave the student of the manly contemplation of the whole" (*CW* I:39). The grand unity of the world—"this tyrannizing unity"— cannot be beheld by empirical analysis. Nature's question instead contains a spiritual answer—the "occult recognition and sympathy" with all forms of life, harkening back to the Cabinet of Natural History in Paris:

> When I behold a rich landscape, it is less to my purpose to recite correctly the order and superposition of the strata, than to know why all thought of multitude is lost in a tranquil sense of unity. I cannot greatly honor minuteness in details, so long as there is no hint to

> explain the relation between things and thoughts; no ray upon the metaphysics of conchology, of botany, of the arts, to show the relation of the forms of flowers, shells, animals, architecture, to the mind, and build science upon ideas." (*CW* I:40)

The image of "strata" is used several times as both metaphor and evidence of the abyss of time and the unity of forms in the secularity of ages upon ages of geological time.

The prophecy is not entirely Emerson's, however. The power of both the poet and the philosopher inspires *Nature*. Emerson returns to George Herbert's "little poem on Man" for a description of the worlds material and spiritual: "All things unto our flesh are kind, / In their descent and being; to our mind, / In their ascent and cause" (*CW* I:41). Tellingly, Emerson does not include the final two theistic stanzas. Turning next to Plato, Emerson reiterates his point about spiritual ends and material means. "In view of this half-sight of science," that values facts over truths, "we accept the sentence of Plato, that 'poetry comes nearer to vital truth than history'" (*CW* I:41). The poet and the philosopher both have something to teach the moral sense about "being," "cause," and "vital truth." That truth is ultimately articulated by Emerson's "Orphic poet": "'Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it. The immobility or bruteness of nature is the absence of spirit; to pure spirit it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient. Every spirit builds itself a house, and beyond its house a world, and beyond its world a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you'" (*CW* I:44).

Emerson gives way to the voices of other individuals and, finally, to his Orphic poet. Whereas Emerson says, "The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque," his Orphic poet says, "'The kingdom of man over nature, which

cometh not with observation, —a dominion such as now is beyond his dream of God, —he shall enter without more wonder than the blind man feels who is gradually restored to perfect sight,'" recalling the miracle of the blind man (*CW* I:43, 45). One must exist for the other, each a teacher, a redeemer of the other. Their truths resonate for each other as they must, for if God is within then, in Herbert's design, the one man serves the other. Each experiences the same spirit. The inspired strains of Emerson and his Orphic poet are not unlike "Reason's momentary grasp of the sceptre" (*CW* I:43). *Nature*'s indeterminacy, emblematic in the oscillation between nature and spirit, is the effect of "an instantaneous in-streaming of power." Like the traditions of miracles and "the history of Jesus Christ," inspiration is itself miraculous—the very miracle of ascension.

The Moral Sentiment and the Divinity School Address

Nature has, in retrospect, little to say about the historical Jesus. Inspiration was, to Emerson and the Transcendentalists, a universal experience, and while uncommon, it was not the exclusive province of ancient prophets, Jesus included. Then again, if "Jesus Christ was a minister of the pure Reason," it then falls to the minister to imitate Christ in this manner, to minister to the spirit (*JMN* V:273). The method Christ used was poetic, namely, the Beatitudes. Statements that speak to the spiritual are those that are paradoxical, seeming contradictions to the understanding on a prosaic level but true in their more poetical sense. Like *Nature*, the Divinity School Address is partly its own "prose poem" on the beauty of what Emerson takes to calling the "moral sentiment."[34] It was not exactly what the graduating seniors at Divinity College had

[34] See Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, "Nature—A Prose Poem," *The Democratic Review*, I (February 1838), 319-321.

asked Emerson to speak about—the topic was supposed to be theism—but the performance had the desired effect of the speaker.[35] Part of that was to recover sense for spirit.

The Divinity School Address, in the way that it attempts to succeed Jesus by making the incarnation universal, contributed to the newly stirring controversy over Jesus's miracles. The Miracles Controversy, so-called, has often been characterized as a theological disagreement within Unitarianism. While their break from Unitarianism was brought about publicly in the dispute over miracles, the Transcendentalists were not opposed to a belief in miracles, but only to the hegemony of empirical rationality that made Christianity a matter of supernatural evidence. Emerson, Parker, and Ripley publicly rejected the idea that miracles were proof of Christ's divine authority; it was in demonstrating moral excellence, and not supernatural gifts, by which Christ establishes his authority on Earth. "The Transcendentalist adopts the whole connection of spiritual doctrine," Emerson says in "The Transcendentalist" (*CW* I: 204). "He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy" (*CW* I:204). To accept the possibilities for material and spiritual transfiguration, this would be the "refulgent" truth of the *Address*.

The operative word in the first sentence, indeed of the entire *Address* itself, is "refulgent" (*CW* I:76). Emerson uses the word in his Sermon CLX, in which he imagines that "our whole soul becomes one refulgent mirror of the presence and power and love of God" (*CS* 4:177). It is "refulgent" rather than, for example, radiant or resplendent in order to signify the lustrous reflection, the shining-surface quality of nature's beauty. "In this refulgent summer it has been a luxury to draw the breath of life. The grass grows, the buds burst, the meadow is spotted with

[35] For a study of the reception and audience of the *Address*, see Jeremy Leitham, "Newborn Bards of the Holy Ghost: The Seven Seniors and Emerson's 'Divinity School Address,'" *The New England Quarterly* 86:4 (2013): 593– 624.

fire and gold in the tint of flowers." The image of a glorious day with all of creation reflecting the "fire and gold" of the sun, is one that shines in the imagination as well. The sacramental glory of nature enjoys its own illumination. Likewise, it enjoys both literally and figuratively the spirit of inspiration. "The air is full of birds, and sweet with the breath of the pine, the balm-of-Gilead, and the new hay," the angels and incense of nature stir the senses. There *is* balm in this Gilead; it grows abundantly from Cambridge to Concord, bringing forth a luxuriant perfume in the spring, one among several allusions to the book of Jeremiah.[36] Emerson's sunny optimism persists into the night, which "brings no gloom to the heart with its welcome shade. Through the transparent darkness pour the stars their almost spiritual rays." Light from the celestial bodies, like the "breath of life" is "almost spiritual," for stars, if they are anything like the spirit, it is because their substance is light that shines through the transparency of the material world. Humanity, like "a young child," wonders at the heavens and, in preparation of the soul, dreams under them as the "cool night bathes the world as with a river, and prepares his eyes again for the crimson dawn," and the refulgence begins anew.

The "refulgent summer" of 1838 reminded Emerson of a previous summer, that of June 1835, when he experienced a heightened awareness of the connection of his spiritual with his bodily nature. A journal leaf from that month transcribed in March 1836 reads, "It is a luxury to live in this beautiful month. One never dares expect a happy day, but the hardest ascetic may inhale delighted this breath of June" as he gazes over the river, watching newly hatched dragonflies in flight (*JMN* V:139). That lustrous day in June has an edifying effect on Emerson's

[36] Oliver Wendell Holmes was the first to identify the Divinity School Address as a Jeremiad. See Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1884), 117-18. See Carol Johnston on the Jeremiad structure of the Divinity School Address. See Carol Johnston, "The Underlying Structure of the Divinity School Address: Emerson as Jeremiah," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1980): 41-49. For an extended analysis of the *Address*'s sources, including the "balm-of-Gilead" symbol and how it alludes to the Old Manse, see Joel Porte, *Representative Man: Ralph Waldo Emerson in His Time* (1979), 127-130.

"body & spirit." It was a revelation to Emerson who recalls the poetry of the scene in his *Address*.[37]

If the "general views" in the first part of the *Address* had a title, it would most likely be "On the Doctrine of the Soul" (*CW* I:80). Instead, Emerson conceived of the *Address* as a "kind of sermon," the first part taking for its text the *libris mundi*, choosing the gospel of nature over God.[38] "The mystery of nature was never displayed more happily," Emerson exclaims, and with a nod to George Herbert, the bread and wine become "the corn and the wine," and fallen nature becomes a sign of grace: "The corn and the wine have been freely dealt to all creatures, and the never-broken silence with which the old bounty goes forward, has not yielded yet one word of explanation. One is constrained to respect the perfection of this world, in which our senses converse."[39] One is "constrained to respect" the munificence of nature instead of God; and while the mystery remains unspoken, "our senses converse" through an affective language that does not need words.

In contrast to the poetry of the opening scene, Emerson follows up with irony. "How wide; how rich; what invitation from every property it gives to every faculty of man!" Human greatness draws its power from nature, "In its fruitful soils; in its navigable sea; in its mountains of metal and stone; in its forests of all woods; in its animals; in its chemical ingredients; in the powers and path of light, heat, attraction, and life," ultimately harnessed by "great men." The economy of nature serves the market economy as natural history is subservient to human history.

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[37] On April 1, 1838, Emerson records that he had met with some Harvard Divinity School students. Alluding to Milton, Emerson says, "I told them that the preacher should be a poet smit with the love of the harmonies of moral nature: and yet look at the Unitarian Association & see if its aspect is poetic. They all smiled No" (*JMN* V:471).

[38] Emerson to Thomas Carlyle, 6 August 1838, *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle* (1964), 191.

[39] For a discussion of Emerson's debt to George Herbert, see Michael J. Colacurcio, "The Corn and the Wine," in *Doctrine and Difference: Essays in the Literature of New England* (1997), 111-128.

Beauty has no practical use, it would seem. Just as reductive as the commodification of nature is the way the intellect simplifies the natural world in laws and theories: "But the moment the mind opens, and reveals the laws which traverse the universe, and make things what they are, then shrinks the great world at once into a mere illustration and fable of this mind." Like the secularizing force of industrialization, knowledge by the understanding alone minimizes the complexity of life. One responds not with religious questions about the meaning of life but more with philosophical questions that burn like the promethean fire of consciousness: "What am I? and What is? asks the human spirit with a curiosity new-kindled, but never to be quenched." cite

Much as *Nature* moved through successive hierarchies of order, the Divinity School Address begins with physical sense, moving through action, intellect, until arriving at the moral sense:

> A more secret, sweet, and overpowering beauty appears to man when his heart and mind open to the sentiment of virtue. Then instantly he is instructed in what is above him. He learns that his being is without bound; that, to the good, to the perfect, he is born, low as he now lies in evil and weakness. That which he venerates is still his own, though he has not realized it yet. *He ought*. (*CW* I:77)

When both the "heart and mind" become receptive to the "sentiment of virtue," the soul, and not a personal God, may be revealed to itself. There is, however, some ambiguity in what is "above" and what is "low." Metaphors of distance in Emerson's "spiritual geography," according to Barbara Packer, "replace the old division of the world and the psyche—according to which good things were above and wicked things below—with a new division of his own—according to which good things come from within, wicked things from without" (*Emerson's Fall* 13). The object of veneration is the subject herself, so it is within rather than above oneself.

A sense of the soul is behind the word “ought.” Emerson points to this in the “optative mood” of “The Transcendentalist.” He merely hints at its significance here, though he will come back to it later. Emerson’s moral imperative is comparable to that of Margaret Fuller. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), for example, the key word is not “ought” but “shall”:

> Always the soul says to us all: Cherish your best hopes as a faith, and abide by them in action. Such shall be the effectual fervent means to their fulfillment,
>
> For the Power to whom we bow
> Has given its pledge that, if not now,
> They of pure and steadfast mind,
> By faith exalted, truth refined,
> *Shall* hear all music loud and clear,
> Whose first notes they ventured here. (163-64)

Female emancipation, ushered in by the likes of de Stael, Martineau, and other representative women of the nineteenth century, is a hope that becomes faith, supported by the heft of an optimistic “shall.” Fuller’s proto-feminist “shall” is a kind of critique; a moral stance that swerves between facts and feeling, between the ethics of “power” and the aesthetics of “music.”

Unlike the music that Fuller describes, all Emerson hears is the enthusiastic clamor of clichéd veneration:

> He knows the sense of that grand word, though his analysis fails entirely to render account of it. When in innocency, or when by intellectual perception, he attains to say, - “I love the Right; Truth is beautiful within and without, forevermore. Virtue, I am thine: save me: use me: thee will I serve, day and night, in great, in small, that I may be not

virtuous, but virtue;'— then is the end of the creation answered, and God is well pleased. (*CW* I: 77)

It is not that the tone turns to sarcasm in that last comment, nor is there anything approaching Jeremiad-like disapproval, but there is note of exasperation. There is, according to Michael J. Colacurcio, a text to consider here in this "kind of sermon," Matthew 3:13-17, the description of Jesus's baptism and the moment he is declared by God the Christ: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."[40] The drollery of Emerson's allusion chastises those who think of veneration in such terms, however sincere it may be. The question then is, in what terms shall one properly venerate the God within?

The minister's role is to elevate their congregations by the intuitive "sentiment of virtue," defined as "a reverence and a delight in the presence of certain divine laws."[41] Those divine laws are not found by atomistic principles of physics or physiology. Those are like a "child amidst his baubles." One feels divinity, for "in the game of human life, love, fear, justice, appetite, man and God interact." That interaction between man and God in the vicissitudes of life reveals the truth of the moral universe, the divine laws; yet "[t]hese laws refused to be adequately stated." "They will not by us or for us be written out on paper, or spoken by the tongue. They elude, evade our persevering thought, and yet we read them hourly in each other's faces, in each other's actions, in our own remorse." Language comes up short when attempting to translate the affective,

[40] See Michael J. Colacurcio, "Pleasing God: The Lucid Strife of Emerson's *Address*," *Doctrine and Difference: Essays in the Literature of New England* (1997).

[41] Robert Milder claims that, "In lineage, the 'sentiment of virtue' is not an offshoot of the Unitarian moral sense" but that "in its 'reverence and delight in the presence of certain divine laws,' it is," in the words of Lawrence Buell, "a secularized descendant of Jonathan Edwards's "divine and supernatural light.'" Robert Milder, "Emerson and the Fortunes of Godless Religion," *The New England Quarterly*, 87:4, (2014), 597-598; Lawrence Buell, *Emerson* (2003), 167.

organic experience. The divine laws can only be discerned intuitively and, thus, individually. This, Emerson tells the future Unitarian ministers, is "the essence of all religion."

If intuition is the general means by which one can know the soul, it is by a specific form of it, the conscience or the moral sentiment, that one ascends toward perfection. Emerson says that "the intuition of the moral sentiment is an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul," and the instrument of moral justice. The precognitive faculty is self-governing, "out of time, out of space, and not subject to circumstance. Thus, in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire" (*CW* I:77-78). The individual who knows himself by virtue and sin, by knowing himself knows God. "If a man is at heart just, then in so far is he God; the safety of God, the immortality of God, the majesty of God do enter into that man with justice" (*CW* I:78). The moral sentiment is, as Emerson described in his first sermon after returning from Europe in 1833, the spirit of truth working inwardly in order to correct the path of the soul. It is an affective force to which one assents, a "rapid intrinsic energy worketh everywhere, righting wrongs, correcting appearances, and bringing up facts to a harmony with thoughts." "By it," Emerson proclaims, "a man is made the Providence to himself, dispensing good to his goodness, and evil to his sin." Emerson proceeds to speak about a personal redemption without regard to Christ's atonement. "See again the perfection of the Law as it applies itself to the affections, and becomes the law of society." Christ is internalized as "Law," a principle of affinity or volition that moves one to fulfill God's will.

The intuitive experience of moral law in nature is that of the moral sublime found, "in each ray of the star, in each wavelet of the pool," wherein the moral sentiment acts upon the soul with the same energetic influence. Here, Emerson's transcendent view is that by divine inspiration mankind is anointed to fulfill the law of God: "These facts have always suggested to

man the sublime creed, that the world is not the product of manifold power, but of one will, of one mind." An original relation with God is to be experienced through benevolent affections, "For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its different applications, just as the ocean receives different names on the several shores which it washes. All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it." Like the waves that wash on the shore, knowledge of God is a liminal experience; humanity is tangential to pure being as one is eternally baptized in the washing waters of the moral sentiment. Conversely, the absence of moral sentiment is the source of evil. "Good is positive," Emerson affirms, "Evil is merely privative, not absolute," the receding of life.

Unlike Edmund Burke who associates the sublime with a feeling of terror and isolation, Emerson's moral sublime is more inclined to pleasure and connectedness with the world. This sublime feeling Emerson associates with the religious sentiment. "Wonderful is [the religious sentiment's] power to charm and to command. It is a mountain air," a reinvigorating inspiration in the physical sense. "It is the embalmer of the world. It is myrrh and storax, and chlorine and rosemary," the literal preserving spirits, remedies for a death-in-life organicism that doubts the permanence of life. The divine is an impersonal order that humanity enjoys. "Thought may work cold and intransitive in things, and find no end or unity," Emerson says, "But the dawn of the sentiment of virtue on the heart, gives and is the assurance that Law is sovereign over all natures; and the worlds," the secularity of, "time, space, eternity, do seem to break out into joy."

In Emerson's account of the moral sentiment, God is a depersonalized "Law"; however, in the religious sentiment, the body is restored and humanity elevated to God. "This sentiment is divine and deifying. It is the beatitude of man." The Beatitudes are internalized. The wisdom is felt but comes from elsewhere. "When he says, 'I ought;' when love warms him; when he

chooses, warned from on high, the good and great deed; then, deep melodies wander through his soul from Supreme Wisdom. Then he can worship, and be enlarged by his worship; for he can never go behind this sentiment." There is a consciousness of duty in Emerson's "ought." Here again, Emerson establishes that worship flows from virtue, and thus the moral sense, this sense of the "ought," produces the immanent frame of religious experience.

Thus far, the "general views" of the *Address* have made nature's beauty the text of this pseudo-sermon before launching into more practical uses of nature and realizing the power of the moral sense. Emerson has been giving his audience something like a demonstration of how to preach the gospel of the Jesus within. He tells the future ministers that the religious sentiment "cannot be received at second hand" (*CW* I:80). "This sentiment lies at the foundation of society," Emerson says, "and successively creates all forms of worship" (*CW* I:79). The moral sentiment is sacred, "Meantime, whilst the doors of the temple stand open, night and day, before every man, and the oracles of this truth cease never, it is guarded by one stern condition; this, namely; It is an intuition." Emerson adds that "it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul. What he announces, I must find true in me, or wholly reject" (*CW* I:80).

Even the great teacher that is Jesus can only offer provocation. His prophecy of the paraclete is of the Spirit of Truth that acts from within to instruct, to correct errors. Jesus is the model of divine perfection in man, yet he is not the only one capable of it. Emerson laments that "The doctrine of inspiration is lost; the base doctrine of the majority of voices, usurps the place of the doctrine of the soul," that the "divine nature is attributed to one or two persons, and denied to all the rest" (*CW* I:80). He states that "Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of the prophets. He saw with open eye the mystery of the soul," while he lived a human life (*CW* I:81). Jesus saw

what is true for mankind, that God incarnates in man, and said, "in this jubilee of sublime emotion, 'I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, speaks. Would you see God, see me; or, see thee, when thou also thinkest as I now think'" (*CW* I:81). Since then, Christianity has suffered from a "distortion," one that puts language over truth, one that builds churches not on principles but on tropes. The word "Miracle" is, to Emerson, a "Monster": "It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain" (*CW* I:81).

The first half of the *Address* illustrates the problem of preaching, namely, how one may preach true religion, "the eternal revelation in the heart," as opposed to mere theology to one's intellect. The second half discharges Emerson's ministerial duty. So far, he has shared his idea about Jesus. He shares with his audience what he sees as the two errors with Christianity. Here the *Address* takes the form of a jeremiad directed at Unitarianism in general. The first error is that

> Historical Christianity has fallen into the error that corrupts all attempts to communicate religion. As it appears to us, and as it has appeared for ages, it is not the doctrine of the soul, but an exaggeration of the personal, the positive, the ritual. It has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration about the *person* of Jesus. The soul knows no persons. (*CW* I:82)

That "noxious exaggeration" can be corrected by following the command to "Obey thyself." "The second defect of the traditionary and limited way of using the mind of Christ," Emerson says, "is a consequence of the first; this, namely;"

> that the Moral Nature, that Law of laws, whose revelations introduce greatness, —yea, God himself, into the open soul, is not explored as the fountain of the established teaching in society. Men have come to speak of the revelation as somewhat long ago

> given and done, as if God were dead. The injury to faith throttles the preacher; and the goodliest of institutions becomes an uncertain and inarticulate voice. (*CW* I:83-84)

In attempting to correct the secular suppositions in Christianity's errors, the first being that the person of Jesus is superior to the spirit of Christ, and the second, placing revelation in the past and not finding it in the present, Emerson recovers the religious from the secular, as he sees it.

If God is truly within, that is, if God is not a superintending, mediated other, then there is no reason to look outside oneself or to another for spiritual enlightenment. But then what can a minister properly do? "The spirit only can teach," Emerson says, "Not any profane man, not any sensual, not any liar, not any slave can teach, but only he can give, who has; he only can create, who is. The man on whom the soul descends, through whom the soul speaks, alone can teach" (*CW* I:84). Spirit and soul are synonymous here as conduits for ascension. The highest reason in the forms of "Courage, piety, love, wisdom, can teach; and every man can open his door to these angels, and they shall bring him the gift of tongues," and lead their congregations in epiphanies, but "the man who aims to speak as books enable, as synods use, as the fashion guides, and as interest commands, babbles. Let him hush" (*CW* I:84).

Emerson addresses the young Divinity School graduates about their "holy office" and the need of "new revelation," telling them "The soul is not preached" (*CW* I:84). First, Emerson tells them to "preach the faith of Christ": "Preaching is the expression of the moral sentiment in application to the duties of life. In how many churches, by how many prophets, tell me, is man made sensible that he is an infinite Soul; that the earth and heavens are passing into his mind; that he is drinking forever the soul of God?" (*CW* I:85). He then discourages the graduates from becoming the next Barzillai Frost (*CW* I:84). "Whenever the pulpit is usurped by a formalist," he claims, "then is the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate," infamously using the Concord

Unitarian minister as his example.[42] That Emerson found the snowstorm outside that day more interesting, more real to him than the preacher "shows that there is a commanding attraction in the moral sentiment," if not the sermon (*CW* 1:86).

Where the future is for the ministry is where the future is for Christianity. Facing the "desponding days" of signing off and declining church membership, Emerson declares that the "remedy" is to be found in the redemption of the soul. "In one soul, in your soul, there are resources for the world. Wherever a man comes, there comes revolution" (*CW* I:89). Emerson may be evoking the Spirit of '76 here, but his impassioned plea for a revolution in religion is not a democratic one. The ministry is not to be abandoned, but transformed. "It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake," to speak to the aesthetic, moral sense of the soul of the listener, otherwise, "The true Christianity, – a faith like Christ's in the infinitude of man, – is lost" (*CW* I:89). It is not a secular unbelief but a reorientation of belief, to remake Christianity to make the subject of worship internal yet objective. Emerson's admonishment "to go alone" is not to abandon Christianity but to "dare to love God without mediator or veil": "Yourself a newborn bard of the Holy Ghost, — cast behind you all conformity, and acquaint men at first hand with Deity. Be to them a man" (*CW* I:90). Preachers are "bards" of the spirit who have within them the ability to move souls by way of the moral sentiment.

Emerson concludes his "Address" with a prophecy about the coming of "the new Teacher":

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[42] The well-cited passage begins: "I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say, I would go to church no more. Men go, thought I, where they are wont to go, else had no soul entered the temple in the afternoon. A snowstorm was falling around us. The snowstorm was real; the preacher merely spectral; and the eye felt the sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him, into the beautiful meteor of the snow" (*CW* I:85-86). For more on the biographical context of this passage, see Conrad Wright, "Emerson, Barzillai Frost, and the Divinity School Address," *Harvard Theological Review* 49, no. 1 (1956): 19– 43.

> I look for the hour when that supreme Beauty, which ravished the souls of those Eastern men, and chiefly of those Hebrews, and through their lips spoke oracles to all time, shall speak in the West also. The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures contain immortal sentences, that have been bread of life to millions. But they have no epical integrity; are fragmentary; are not shown in their order to the intellect. I look for the new Teacher, that shall follow so far those shining laws, that he shall see them come full circle; shall see their rounding complete grace; shall see the world to be the mirror of the soul; shall see the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart; and shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy. (*CW* I: 92-93).

The first part of the prophecy is historical. It is a progressive, religious vision of an epic power. The second part of the prophecy is individual. The new Teacher will not be constrained like those beforementioned souls who could not comprehend the transcendent knowledge of God; the new Teacher "shall follow so far those shining laws, that he shall see them come full circle."

Emerson had tried to unite natural laws and spiritual laws in *Nature* but only had brief epiphanies that suggested their correspondence. His poetry could only draw analogies and offer metaphors upon metaphors. The new Teacher is one with a commanding sense of insight, one who fully realizes the world created by the subject is the same as the world of God. The new Teacher, Emerson says, "shall show that the Ought, that Duty, is one thing with Science, with Beauty, and with Joy." Or, in the words of another orphic poet, one cannot infer ought from is.

The moral sense, while it briefly held the promise of transcendence, was ultimately supplanted by the immanence of the moral sentiment. Still, Emerson holds out hope for one who will transfigure humanity with their spiritual insight. This same millennialist desire for a perfected state will characterize the affective Transcendentalism of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody,

steadfast believer in the utopian dream of Association and Christian community through the power of the “social principle.”

CHAPTER 2

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Christ, and the Social Principle

On March 22, 1841, at Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's West Street bookstore in Boston, Margaret Fuller's conversations were well into their second year. One of the few surviving transcripts of those conversations dates from that day on which Peabody, it is presumed, recorded Fuller and her audience's attempts to answer the question, "What is life?" "Let us define, each in turn, our idea of living," Fuller proposes, challenging her audience to both verbalize and systematize their thoughts (*Memoirs* I: 345). Fuller went around the room calling on the women present. (This was one of the occasions when no men were in attendance.) Anna Shaw thought it was "too great a question" and suggested a written definition, but Fuller insisted that they talk, however difficult it might be to find the words. Caroline Sturgis gave it a go. Fuller thought her definition "good, but not grave enough" (*Memoirs* I: 346). Then Peabody opined: "Life is division from one's principle of life in order to a conscious reorganization. We are cut up by time and circumstance, in order to feel our reproduction of the eternal law."

This statement will surely not help vindicate Peabody from the charges of her notorious vagueness, but it does show how willing she was to attempt to systematize her thought in some way. She tries saying something about the relationship between the human experience and a divine oneness, the two obtuse sentences being restatements of the same idea. The main difference is in their tone. The first sounds like an android analyzing an equation. In the second, Peabody sounds like a mystical doula. What she refers to as the cutting of time and circumstance could be a theory of history, while the separation of consciousness sounds like a theory of sin, two subjects that fascinated Peabody.

Fuller's definition of life seems to incorporate elements of all the responses: freedom, fullness, creativity, consciousness:

> She began with God as Spirit, Life, so full as to create and love eternally, yet capable of pause. Love and creativeness are dynamic forces, out of which we, individually, as creatures, go forth bearing his image; that is, having within our being the same dynamic forces by which we also add constantly to the total sum of existence, and shaking off ignorance, and its effects, and by becoming more ourselves, i.e., more divine—destroying sin in its principle, we attained to absolute freedom, we return to God, conscious like himself, and, as his friends, giving, as well as receiving, felicity forevermore. In short, we become gods, and able to give the life which we now feel ourselves able only to receive.[1]

While nearly all the other women who responded to the question, including Fuller herself, had incorporated "God" into their statements, Peabody did not. It seems uncharacteristic considering how much religious writing Peabody did in her life.

Peabody would spend the better part of a decade searching for the words to express her religious thoughts on life, or "*the life*," as she sometimes put it. Whether she looked for it in scripture, history, Transcendentalist Association, or her own mystical experience, Peabody always found her answer in Jesus Christ. Throughout her religious writings, Peabody renders portraits of the personhood of Jesus and the possibilities for humanity through a new life, one in mystical union with Christ. Like other Unitarians and members of the Transcendentalist circle, Peabody tried to reconcile the gospel lives of the historical person who is Jesus of Nazareth with the divine avatar that is Christ who exists for the faithful in the eternal present. The miracles controversy demonstrated the problem with choosing one over the other. Peabody, on the other

[1] [Sarah] Margaret Fuller [Ossoli], *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (1852), I:346-47.

hand, tried to resolve the lives and the meaning of Jesus Christ through several Christological works that develop a millennialist theology she called “the social principle.” It is this “social principle” that informs Peabody’s affective Transcendentalism.

The first of Peabody’s three Christologies, one which anticipates the controversial “newness,” and to some degree, Emerson’s Divinity School Address, is a series of articles she published in 1835 that, until now, have gone unnoticed by scholars because they had not previously been attributed to Peabody. “The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man,” was published anonymously in five parts—the first three letters in the *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer* for May 21, 28, and June 11, 1835, and the final letter in the *Christian Register and Boston Observer* split between the September 19 and 26, 1835 issues. This chapter will make a strong case that these letters are indeed the work of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and that they represent Peabody’s first original, published thoughts on Christianity and foreground her thoughts that would become the basis for “the social principle.” In addition to “The Life of Christ…,” Peabody would publish a four-part series of Sunday school lessons in the *Boston Observer* that same year as well as an excerpt from her *Record of a School* (1835) and two poems, including the transcendental “The New Body.” Peabody conceived of her ambitious “The Life of Christ” as a practical Christian manual that takes the form of letters to a friend, quite possibly her spiritual mentor, William Ellery Channing, with whom Peabody had had, by 1835, an intense correspondence on religious matters for over a decade. The life of Christ that Peabody offers in her practical manual is the perfection of the soul.

Peabody would later develop her Christology, turning from individual to collective salvation, in her essay “A Glimpse of Christ’s Idea of Society.” The essay, appearing in the October 1841 issue of *The Dial*, was among several writings that Peabody published on or

relating to the subject of the Brook Farm Association. Peabody became the most vocal proponent of Brook Farm during its first phase, its more hopeful and Transcendental phase. In her published writings on Brook Farm, which include a letter announcing its plans as well as three essays in the Transcendentalist journal *The Dial* between 1841 and 1842, Peabody describes Brook Farm as a place where "*the life*" is possible. "A Glimpse" shows how the postmillennial heaven on earth is achieved through the "social principle."

Finally, the most provocative, most personal, and most imaginative of Peabody's published work is a piece simply titled "A Vision." Published in James Russell Lowell's short-lived journal *The Pioneer* in March of 1843, "A Vision" is a narrative that recounts an apparently mystical experience of the author who takes a journey through history toward its apocalyptic end. It is the culmination of Peabody's socially and religiously oriented Transcendentalism, what one scholar has called her "Transcendentalist Manifesto."[2] It is also a response to both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller's egotheistical individualisms. Like a parody of Orpheus in the underworld, Peabody tries to rescue *the life* from dead philosophies and religions by imagining an ineffable, intuitive truth that vanishes as soon as one attempts to look back on the vision and communicate it in words.

This chapter introduces Peabody as a religious writer before taking a closer look at her Christological works. Her early religious writings are key to understanding her belief in a social principle that can be traced through her career. These writings take a range of different forms: exegesis, poetry, epistolary, critical essay, and narrative. Each shows the development of Peabody's social theology: from her spiritual principles of moral instruction and her thoughts on the communion with Christ in "The Life of Christ," to her ideas on Association and Brook Farm

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[2] See Diane Brown Jones, "Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's Transcendental Manifesto," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1992), 195–207.

in “A Glimpse,” to the meaning of history and the atonement in “A Vision.” The social theology underlying these Christologies counters the secularizing humanism of liberal Christianity while at the same time recovers social theology from New England orthodoxy. It is not, however, a Transcendentalist middle way—that is, a synthesis of rationalism and supernaturalism, or reason and faith. It is not the intellect alone that Christ saves, according to Peabody; it is the mind, which includes mind and heart—a new definition of life in the organic unity of body and spirit in the person of Jesus Christ. And this, as it extends to the social affections, is Peabody’s affective Transcendentalism of the “social principle.”

Early Religious Writings and the “Social Principle”

Peabody was a central figure in the Transcendentalist movement. She was not just the “Boswell” of the coterie, as Theodore Parker once called her, but in her own unique way stood alongside her peers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller as a central figure of the group.[3] Whereas Emerson idealized the role of the poet-priest and Fuller the genius-hero, Peabody pursued her own ideal as the avatar of the teacher-prophetess. Nevertheless, her status as a Transcendentalist has long been a topic of debate. Biographer Megan Marshall makes a strong case for Peabody as a serious religious writer. “Peabody, as an early transcendentalist—perhaps the first American transcendentalist—held that God is within man and that God-in-man is social, maternal, emphatic, and philanthropic,” as her writings and numerous activities attest (5). Whether or not one accords Peabody the distinction of being a bona fide transcendentalist, she clearly engaged in the same theological debates about Biblical authority and doctrinal interpretation as her male counterparts. She was decidedly, in the words of Phyllis Cole, a “Christian transcendentalist” like Theodore Parker and James Freeman Clarke, who remained

[3] Theodore Parker, quoted in Franklin B. Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (1909), 548.

ministers in the Unitarian church after other friends like Ralph Waldo Emerson and George Ripley resigned their pulpits ("Elizabeth Peabody in the Nineteenth Century" 146). Meanwhile, Peabody was an entrepreneur of sorts, a "reformer on her own terms" in the words of biographer Bruce A. Ronda. At an early age, Peabody wrote, translated, and published her work all the while working as a schoolteacher. The endeavors Peabody made into the 1840s, while they were certainly available to women, were pursued by very few. She was the publisher of the *Dial*, the one-volume *Aesthetic Papers* (1849), and other works while competing with publisher William D. Ticknor. She was also the owner and curator of her Foreign Library on West Street where she hosted the Transcendental Club and the series of conversations led by Margaret Fuller.[4] Above all, Peabody was highly regarded by her peers. Theodore Parker found her to be a talented writer with a gift for narrative, "a woman of most astonishing powers," with "a many-sidedness and a largeness of soul quite unusual; rare qualities of head and heart" (Sanborn, *Recollections* 548). She was equally admired by Emerson. He made a sketch of his former Greek student in another notebook, which reads,

> A wonderful literary head, with extraordinary rapidity of association, and a methodizing faculty which enabled her to weave surprising theories very fast, & very finely, from slight materials. Of another sex, she would have been a first-rate academician; and, as it was, she had the ease & scope & authority of a learned professor or high literary celebrity in her talk. I told her I thought she ought to live a thousand years, her schemes of study & the necessities of reading which her inquiries implied, required so much. She was

[4] For a history of Peabody's West Street library, see Leslie Perrin Wilson, "'No Worthless Books': Elizabeth Peabody's Foreign Library, 1840–52," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 99:1 (2005) 113–152.

superior, & really amiable, but took no pains to make herself personally agreeable, & was not neat,— & offended. (*L* I: 449-50, fn. 70)

His remarks on her hygiene aside, Emerson held Peabody in high regard as someone who exceeded the limits put upon her sex and rivaled those of the opposite. Emerson would also include a quotation from her work-in-progress translation of Guillaume Oegger's *The True Messiah* (1829) in his "little book" *Nature* in 1836.[5]

Despite her accomplishments, Peabody's reputation as an intellectual seems to have been in perpetual recovery ever since Henry James made her the model for Miss Birdseye in *The Bostonians* (1886). Then again, the character of Birdseye, in all her Peabody-like grandiosity and enthusiasm with a tendency for vagueness, undergoes a kind of redemption in the novel, not unlike what Peabody had experienced in her own life in Boston society. Earlier in the nineteenth century, Peabody's association with Bronson Alcott's controversial Temple School made her a target of ridicule. Several decades later Peabody distinguished herself as a pioneering educator who brought kindergarten to the United States. Peabody's eccentricities became legendary, making it difficult for many to take her seriously. (One of the more famous examples is the anecdote of her walking into a tree on the Boston Common. Afterwards she said, "Yes, I saw it, but I did not realize it.") Nevertheless, Peabody is an intellectual whom we ought to take seriously—not just as an educational reformer but as a writer who made her own important contribution to Transcendentalism.

[5] In Chapter 4 of *Nature*, Emerson quotes from Peabody's manuscript translation of *The True Messiah* by Guillaume Oegger: "A Fact is the end or last issue of spirit. The visible creation is the terminus or the circumference of the invisible world. 'Material objects,' said a French philosopher, 'are necessarily kinds of scoriae of the substantial thoughts of the Creator, which must always preserve an exact relation to their first origin; in other words, visible nature must have a spiritual and moral side'" (*CW* I:22-23). Peabody reviewed Emerson's 1836 "prose poem" in 1838. See "Nature—A Prose Poem," *The Democratic Review*, vol. I (February 1838): 319-321.

Peabody's career as an experimental and pioneering educator is well documented; what is less well understood is Peabody's career as a religious writer. For example, one of her earliest religious writings is her exegesis of the Gospel of John.[6] Biblical exegesis was one of the few forms of religious writing that was open to women in the 1820s. In the fragment, which survives as an entry in Ralph Waldo Emerson's journal, Peabody discusses how the "moral truth" of the Gospel of John corresponds with the idea of God as a "creating power" by Moses: "The principles of God's moral government & his purposes towards his creatures constitute what we mean by Moral Truth. In its deepest & most extensive sense moral truth therefore means the mind of the Deity – all of the Deity except his power" (*JMN* 489). Here the young Peabody articulates a postmillennial eschatology—the apocalypse of the mind. The moral government of which she speaks is the millennium, or thousand-year reign of Christ that is prophesized in Revelation 20. But it is in John's gospel that Peabody finds hope for man's eventual progress, stating, "In moral truth is found immortality & their instinctive love of immortality is the light of men" (*JMN* VIII:490). Ultimately, humanity must "cultivate the instinct" for the mind of God if it is to attain the glory of heaven. This was the example of Christ who, in Peabody's eschatology, came to enlighten the world. When he comes again it is a spiritual return in the soul. Peabody takes up the subjects of the Creation and Moses again for her series on "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures." It was in the first of these essays, published in the Unitarian journal the *Christian Examiner* in 1834, that Peabody introduced her idea of the "social principle," an idea that she shared with her friend and mentor, William Ellery Channing.

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[6] This work survives as an entry labeled "Rendered by Miss E. Peabody" in Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Dialling" notebook in which Emerson had transcribed the words of Peabody after his aunt Mary Moody Emerson had shared the manuscript with him in 1832 (*JMN* VIII:489-90).

Unitarianism was just springing forth from a religious controversy within Congregationalism when Peabody was a child. Born in Salem, Massachusetts, and raised by a woman, a Sunday school teacher who fit the profile of a republican mother, young Miss Peabody came to understand her religion as part of a progressive American history. She felt that "The moral character of the Unitarian movement was the logical evolution of the Pilgrim emigration," that is, "from the ground of the Calvinistic speculations" of New England's early English colonists, Roger Williams would establish "the first community in Christendom—if not on earth—that separated Church and State" (*Reminiscences* 27-29). The challenge to orthodoxy in Massachusetts was "the earliest blossom, and the Unitarian protest a later fruit" (*Reminiscences* 29). Not only did the split between Congregationalists result in a New England religious culture that was decidedly more heterodox, the Unitarian Church also helped to eliminate the compulsory tax that supported congregations. In turn, the Transcendentalist protest within Unitarianism over such issues as Biblical miracles, inspiration, and the divinity of Christ, would bear its own fruit in the form of alternative communities like Brook Farm that, for Peabody, represented the possibility for a new millennium.

It was during her childhood that Peabody first heard the Unitarian divine, William Ellery Channing, deliver a sermon in her hometown of Salem. When she was about eight or nine years old, Peabody writes, "I was thrilled as never before by the thought of a man's communing with God, face to face; and years after, when I heard him read those words of the Psalmist, laying the same emphasis on the prepositions, I recognized how it had given me a sense of the Eternal" (*Reminiscences* 113-14). For Peabody, the young minister was capable of a mystic relation with the Divine, not just a vague sense of an omnipotent being but actually seeing him. Their intense intellectual and spiritual relationship began in 1820 and lasted until Channing's death in 1842. In

a letter, Peabody recounts how mesmerizing she found her future mentor who, in a charismatic way, addressed his prayers to the heavens. "[I]ndeed that habit he has of looking up to Heaven so continually is the charm of his manner," Peabody said, "You feel that he is indeed a man 'whose thoughts are not of this world'" (*EPPL* 53-54). As the subject of Peabody's semi-autobiographical *Reminiscences of Rev. Wm. Ellery Channing, D.D.* (1880), Channing seems to play the part of an inspirational mentor, the Goethe to Peabody's Eckermann, engaging in a spiritual conversation that lasted nearly two decades. Yet there was a confluence of ideas between the two.

Rather than a "Romantic Channingite" who absorbed all of Channing's ideas, Peabody arrived at her religious views independent of as well as in conversation with Channing (Capper I:317). An example can be found in the idea of self-culture. *Self-Culture* (1838) was Channing's formulation of what was otherwise known as individual self-improvement, or self-discipline but with less dependence on grace and greater emphasis on intellect and education. This sermon appears long after the commencement of the Channing-Peabody friendship. In fact, "Peabody was already practicing a form of self-culture before her relationship with Channing," according to Susan H. Irons, citing Peabody's "self-imposed regimen of reading and studying" and "an impressive plan of theological study" which a nineteen-year-old Peabody devised for her younger sister Sophia in 1823 for "the cultivation of your intellect, your taste, and your heart" (*EPPL* 59). Likewise, Peabody emphasized the social aspect of self-culture, self-cultivation as a version of Puritanical grace that is shared in the corporate body, while cautioning against the excesses of individualism as a self-centered "egotheism."[7] In his 1842 journal, Emerson states,

[7] "Egotheism" was Peabody's word for excessive individualism to the exclusion of God. Egotheism "denies other self-consciousness to God than our own subjective consciousness." Peabody, "Egotheism, the Atheism of To-day," *Last Evening with Allston, and Other Papers* (1886), 245.

"The young people, like [Orestes] Brownson, [William Henry] Channing, [Christopher] Greene, E[lizabeth]. P[almer]. P[eabody]., & possibly Bancroft think that the vice of the age is to exaggerate individualism, & they adopt the word *l'humanité* from Le Roux, and go for '*the race*'" (*JMN* VIII: 249). Nevertheless, if Emerson and Thoreau represent the dynamic of the more nature-based, individualistic Concord Transcendentalism, Channing and Peabody are the equivalent within the more religious, collective Boston Transcendentalism.[8] What Channing had called "self-culture" in 1838 was not completely different from what Peabody had called "spiritual culture" several years before as Bronson Alcott's assistant at the experimental Temple School. In 1835, Peabody wrote about her experience in *Record of a School*. In it, Peabody records Alcott's methods as well as her own ideas about education, included in her introduction "Method to Spiritual Culture." Peabody's theory of education aimed for the improvement of the soul by the development of one's sense of morality and duty. Her pupils were instructed, after the teachings of Christ, to find the kingdom of heaven within themselves by learning to discern spiritual truth from their intuition and imagination.

At the time she was in conversation with Channing about self-culture, Peabody developed a theology around the concept of the "social principle." The term was one she may have heard Channing use before. One of the first sermons that Peabody may have heard Channing preach at his Federal Street Church was titled "Religion a Social Principle." In it, Channing argues that, rather than a private, personal piety, religion is social, engendering benevolent affections that bind communities together. "Society," Channing says, "is the school

[8] It is also worth noting that Peabody completed two translations of Joseph Marie de Gérando's works several years before: *Self-education; or the Means and Art of Moral Progress* (1830) and *Visitor of the Poor* (1832). The first of these, *Self-education*, discussing such topics as "how the love of excellence purifies the affections" and "how intellectual progress conduces to moral progress," was essential reading for the formation of both Channing's and Peabody's methods of achieving moral perfection. The charitable spirit of *The Visitor of the Poor* would inform Peabody's social theology of Association.

in which the heart is trained for the creator" (7). This sermon was largely a response to the cultural shift in New England at that time when religion was being moved out of the public sphere. Church membership was declining as well. Channing addresses earlier doubts about institutional authority among his parishioners by describing a religion that is altogether more practical than one that has "little or no relation to the *present* life." He also imagines the possibility of a utopian republic that such a religion would foster (17).

It is in "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures" where the social principle is described by Peabody as a form of "sympathy," as distinguished from sentimental notions such as "a spring of emotion deeper than the emotions of beauty and sublimity" or an affective impulse that propels human progress (188). This moral feeling of sympathy does not subdue the will so much as it finds harmony with the divine, "that principle capable of being God within us" (190). Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was made out of a profound love for all mankind. "So deeply was the social principle rooted in his heart," Peabody explains, that Christ "suffered and died for his fellow creatures, and lived for no other end than their salvation. He was an unfallen spirit, looking upon the social relations; and to him all men, however remote, were felt to be as brethren" (189). Peabody theorizes that one can experience a kind of affective transformation in the same way Jesus did by this "pure moral power" in a community of others who share a "common nature," indeed a kind of religious fellowship of individuals who keep God's command "to have dominion" over themselves, having "quelled the grosser appetites" of their animal nature (190, 188).

It is the role that woman, specifically Eve, plays in society that makes such sympathy possible. In her interpretation of the Creation, Peabody defends the graphic image of God taking a rib from Adam to create Eve as a way to show how "the divine origin of the social relations

[was] presented to the minds of the people by Moses" (193). "The narrative contains the fact," Peabody says, "from which springs sympathy, or the social principle: this fact is the common nature." The realization of humanity's "common nature"—the body that Adam understands he shares with Eve ("bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh")—is a fact that causes one to feel sympathy for the human race. Peabody could make a point here about the racist oppression of enslaved persons, but she does not. Instead, she emphasizes the importance of social and familial responsibilities. In other words, labor is required of Adam to support the future of the human race, and he fulfills this responsibility to all, not just to his wife and children, almost instinctively. Peabody adds that "Another important effect of the doctrine of the common nature, as stated by Moses, is the moral equality of man and woman" (195). Peabody asserts the masculine and feminine aspects of God years before her Transcendentalist contemporary Margaret Fuller would do so in "The Great Lawsuit."

A fourth installment of "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures" had been planned but was too Transcendental for its editor, Andrews Norton. Nevertheless, there is evidence that suggests that the essay would have anticipated her ideas in "A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society." In her 1840 letter to Orestes Brownson, Peabody claims that she had originally written her reflections on "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures" in 1826, "the first year of my intellectual life properly speaking," but submitted her essay for publication seven years later (*EPPL* 248). "Had not Mr. Norton cut off untimely my little series which consisted of six numbers, it would have recorded quite a little historical fact, there in the bosom of Unitarianism, an unlearned girl, with only the help of those principles of philosophizing she gathered from the perusal of Coleridge's friend, & relying simply on her own poetical apprehension, as a principle of exegesis, should have seen just what is here expressed, concerning the *socialism* of true Religion & the divinity of Christ."

Brownson apparently declined its publication in his quarterly; still, it is possible that the ideas about "the *socialism* of true Religion & the divinity of Christ" contained in this lost fourth number of "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures" found their way into Peabody's "A Glimpse."

After "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures," Peabody moved on from Biblical exegesis. Nina Baym has argued that "Peabody rejected the traditional millennialist practice that had concentrated exclusively on biblical exegesis" and would also reject "the Transcendentalist turn to nature, which she saw as abrogating history altogether. The same religious conviction animated both rejections: she believed that God's full intentions concerning humankind were not to be found in depopulated nature or in the history of any one human group – not even the group that had been favored with revelation" (30).[9] Instead, she would, in the Spring of 1835, embarked on a project similar to what so many of the "spiritualists" would do in the *annus mirabilis* year of 1836: a manual for those who would live in the spirit.

"The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man"

Throughout her long life, Elizabeth Peabody was a selfless social reformer motivated by a desire for collective salvation. Every aspect of her career—as writer, editor, publisher, entrepreneur, and pioneering educator—was an expression of her reform ethic, which grew out of her deep Christian faith as a Unitarian. Transcendentalism was, of course, a reform movement within Unitarianism, a denomination known for its commitment to social reform. Curing—or attempting to cure—society's innumerable ills, especially through education, was the hallmark of a good Unitarian. "The Unitarians," Daniel Walker Howe explains, "never constituted more than a small movement within American Protestantism, but they played an important part in the

[9] Baym reads "The Spirit of the Hebrew Scriptures" in the larger arc of Peabody's career in which she applies theories of language to interpret periods in history.

propagation of ideas of individual and collective improvement in nineteenth-century America" (*American Self* 131). The key word is "improvement." Moral perfectionism, the improvement of oneself in order to grow closer to God, was a postmillennial ideal. Postmillennialist Christians like Unitarians believed that Christ would return to earth after humanity had reformed itself, as opposed to premillennialists who adhering strictly to Revelation's forecast believed that Christ's return would come before a literal thousand-year reign. Peabody, as a postmillennialist, saw the Transcendentalist movement as having the potential to transfigure society.

The schoolroom was where moral sentiments, or "spiritual culture," could be fostered. Peabody and other Unitarians imagined the ideal society that would be molded in such a way as a kind of school. For example, several months before the Temple School opened, Peabody attended a sermon by Channing on *The Future Life* (1834) in which he describes heaven as a school without end—a self-culture *ad infinitum* (*EPPL* 129-30). We must not think of Heaven as a stationary community," Channing says, "I think of it as a world of stupendous plans and efforts for its own improvement. I think of it, as a society passing through successive stages of development, virtue, knowledge, power, by the energy of its own members" ("The Future Life" 234). The many mansions in God's house are many different heavens, different levels of spiritual beings. Beyond this Miltonic understanding of heaven, he adds, "There the work of education, which began here, goes on without end; and a diviner philosophy than is taught on earth, reveals the spirit to itself, and awakens it to earnest, joyful effort for its own perfection." James Freeman Clarke would put it more plainly: "Unitarians believe that the future life will be a continuation of the present life, with opportunity for further growth and development" (*Manual* 57).

The Unitarian belief in the personality of the deity but not the divinity of Jesus relegates the atonement to a lesson for humanity, and not the supreme sacrifice that he made for humanity.

This was the fault of liberal Christianity as a whole, so far as Peabody was concerned. If life was a school, then Christ would be its teacher, nothing more. In what Charles Taylor has called the "impersonal order" of Unitarianism, a Christianity without Christ is a humanism that clings to the historical Jesus, while orthodox Christians claim theirs is the one true church despite the lack of external evidences. The only evidences Peabody would concern herself with are the internal ones. Her Christ is found in the heart, and her Christologies are an effort at reconciling the division between Christ the teacher and Christ the savior. The first attempt at this are the articles on "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man," the first three installments published in the *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer*, and the final two appearing in the *Christian Register and Boston Observer* in 1835.

The Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer may be considered the very first Transcendentalist periodical. Publication of the paper, "devoted to liberal Christianity, Sunday Schools, Literature, and Intelligence," began January 1, 1835. It enjoyed a brief, six-month run, before finally merging with the *Christian Register* the following June. Under the editorship of George Ripley, issues of the *Boston Observer* printed news pertaining to the Unitarian community and items of interest to Sunday school teachers. It also featured articles and poems by many who would be associated with the Transcendental Club when they were still known by some as the "spiritualists." Orestes A. Brownson, for example, was a regular contributor. His series "Essays for the Believer and Disbeliever" begins, "I think, Mr Editor, that I may assume it to be true that we live in an unbelieving age, and that the great want of our times, is faith in the reality of a spiritual world" (2). In addition to religious opinions, the *Observer* regularly published poetry. "Sunshine and Storms," an early poem by Ellen Sturgis Hooper, was reprinted in the first issue:

Is not this alternate strife
Like the changes of our life?
And may not the storm arise
In the quiet of our skies—
And the folds of darkness roll
O'er the radiance of the soul—
And the gladness of the heart,
Like a flash of light depart? (8)

Contributors to later issues would include Cyrus A. Bartol, Christopher Pearse Cranch, Frederic Henry Hedge, John Sullivan Dwight, and James Freeman Clarke. It was in the April 23, 1835, issue that Clarke reported on the spread of liberal Christianity on the frontier and announced the launch of the Transcendentalist periodical, the "Western Examiner," which would later be renamed *The Western Messenger*, to which Peabody would also contribute.[10] Other notable contributors to the *Boston Observer* include Washington Allston, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Elijah Parish Lovejoy, Samuel Joseph May, John G. Palfrey, and Lydia H. Sigourney.

Peabody was an important contributor to George Ripley's *Boston Observer*. Over a dozen articles and two poems can be attributed to her. These writings fall into two categories: educational and transcendental. Each is identified by a different set of initials and both feature previously unknown writings by Peabody. The first group of Peabody's writings, identified by her last initials, "P. P.," pertain to her career as an educator. The first of these is under the header of "Sunday School Lesson." It is a four-part series documenting Peabody's "extemporaneous"

[10] James Freeman Clarke, "Liberal Christianity in the West," *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer* 1:1 (23 April 1835): 134.

Socratic dialogue with her students which took place at the Bethel Sunday School of the New Bedford, Massachusetts Seaman's Bethel of "Father" Edward Taylor fame.

The teacher begins her lesson by asking her students if stones are alive, "if they cannot think or enjoy themselves," before moving on to ask the same of plant and animal life. She eventually arrives at the question of the soul: "What is a soul?"[11] "Every thing in education depends on the view taken of the soul," proclaims Peabody in her *Record of a School* published that same year.[12] The responses of the three students, aged seven through ten, prompt further discussion on the topics of conscience and a feeling of God, which Peabody tells them can be had through a heightening of the moral sense or an increase of "goodness."[13] At one point in the lesson, Peabody asks her students, "How do we know better?"[14] "They were silent," she says, "but it seemed to be from want of words rather than of thought." She goes to tell them that conscience is the soul's way of knowing God. "It is because this conscience, which is a little goodness, makes us know God who is goodness itself. He is goodness made into a Being!" Another educational series would follow, Peabody's three-part "Lesson on Pilgrim's Progress," running in issues for April 1835. Once again, the conversation was on the nature of the soul and the Neoplatonic idea of conscience as a "remembrance" of God. Peabody reprinted this conversation in place of her "General Principles of Spiritual Culture" in the second edition of *Record of a School* (1836).[15]

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[11] Peabody, "Sunday School Lesson," *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer*, 1:2 (8 Jan 1835): 11.

[12] Peabody, *Record of a School* (1836), 182.

[13] Peabody, "Sunday School Lesson," *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer*, Vol. 1, no. 3 (15 Jan 1835): 19.

[14] Peabody, "Sunday School Lesson," *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer*, Vol. 1, no. 4 (22 Jan 1835): 26.

[15] Peabody, *Record of a School* (1836), 169-173.

Peabody published two poems in the *Boston Observer*. The first was “A Birth-day Blessing, to _____ _____, Twelve Years Old.” It is a sentimental poem that celebrates the Wordsworthian ideal of childhood as closeness to God, just what one might expect from a Sunday school teacher.[16] Simple paired couplet stanzas offer the poet’s moral instruction to the boy who will soon be a man: “Thou spirit bright,” the poet speaks, “My heart will wish that childhood’s sacred power / Could still prolong for thee its consecrating hour.” Time is a test of moral fortitude, of retaining the optimism and purity of one’s youth. “Yet what is Time?” asks the poet. For some it can be a process of degeneration and decay for those who “turn aside to eat / at the tree of death! Unfortified to meet / The giant spirit of the earth.” For “the saint, the hero, and the sage,” the artists and poets, and those who draw their strength from them and from God will preserve “childhood’s love and instincts” in their hearts.

> Then ever be a child! In this one prayer
> I ask for all the loftiest man can share;
> The spirit free from “custom’s frosty weight,”
> And open to all thought that makes our being great.[17]

The conservative theme of character formation, strengthened by time’s test, ends in a plea on behalf of the liberal spirit. The cold burden of traditional values and ideas stands in contrast to the freedom of mind. Greatness is found not in individualism but in a collective, “our being.”

“A Birth-day Blessing” was used as part of one of Bronson Alcott’s lessons that appears in *Record of a School*. It also appeared in *The Boston Book* for 1836 under a different title,

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[16] Peabody corresponded with William Wordsworth over a period of fifteen years. See Margaret Neussendorfer, “Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to William Wordsworth: Eight Letters, 1825-1845,” *Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1984, 181–211.

[17] *Boston Observer*, p. 16. The quoted phrase “custom’s frosty weight” also appears in a similar phrasing in Peabody’s anonymous review, “The Novels of Miss Sedgwick” in *The American Monthly Magazine* (1836), 16.

"Childhood."[18] Peabody later reprinted the poem as "Verses to G.C., on his Twelfth Birthday" in the collection *Last Evening with Allston and Other Papers* (1886).[19] In the dedication to that collection, Peabody thanks her friends and refers to other writings that she hoped to collect into a second volume of her works: "I omit some articles which were not completed, but which may possibly appear in a subsequent volume completed, together with other articles not yet published." It is very possible that the writings in the *Boston Observer* and the *Christian Register* which are attributable to Peabody were some of the very writings she had in mind.

Peabody's second poem in the *Boston Observer* is more transcendental in theme. "The New Body" appears in the issue for April 23, 1835. The poem, composed of twelve Spenserian stanzas, is signed with Elizabeth Peabody's first initial, "E." She would sign the essays on "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" as "E" as well. It is as if she wanted to keep separate the Transcendentalist "E" from the Unitarian educator "P. P."

The poem's epigraph, taken from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, poses a question about the nature of resurrection.[20] Thus, the first stanza begins, "When the departing spirit flies to heaven, / And o'er the clay is dropt the bitter tear,"—tears being so biblically bitter in romantic poetry—adding, "We leave the destiny of the soul to God, / To the long fellowship with dust, the body here," hopeful for a return to paradise for the departed on Judgment Day with the resurrection of the body.[21] "But gloomy doubts within the mind will rise," and even "faith may falter at the distant day, / While that loved object in earth's bosom lies," the speaker

[18] Peabody, "Childhood," *The Boston Book; Being Specimens of Metropolitan Literature, Occasional and Periodical* (1836), 93-94.

[19] Peabody, "Verses to G. C., on His Twelfth Birthday 1830," *Last Evening with Allston and Other Papers* (1886), 343-44. "G. C." may have been one of Peabody's students, a George Cabot, perhaps.

[20] 1 Corinthians 15:35.

[21] [Peabody], "The New Body," *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer*, vol. I, no.16 (23 April 1835): 136.

ruminates while, “Ages on ages are to roll away.” The body is no longer the person but a beloved object. As the poem proceeds, the speaker deliberates over how resurrection can be physically possible and what it will be like:

> Within the earth that kernel long shall lie;
> Ere it be quickened to assume a suit
> Of verdure—its new body—it shall die;
> The folds which wrap the precious germ and root
> Must all decay, that they may them recruit.
> And when the issues of its death arise,
> We then discern the texture of the shoot,
> And much we wonder, that the seed which dies
> Lives and revives again, and bears its proper fruit.

Like Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* from which “A New Body” takes its stanzaic form, there are several levels of allegory at play. There is the allegory of Edenic exile comingled with the allegory of the seed and the allegory of the wheat and the chaff. The metaphor that is “the body here” becomes enlarged to a celestial scale. Death and resurrection lead to a new body in an invisible world. But to what end is this, if life is all allegory? What is the meaning of allegory itself?

The final line answers the question of transcendentalist correspondence without sophistication. “The body natural is spiritual instead.” The Corinthian body of pure spirit, of light, is the “natural” body, whereas the corporeal object was just a material analogy for spirit. The seed that is the body sheds its “scoriae” and shoots upward toward the sun like one of the aspiring vegetables Bronson Alcott hoped to dine on at Fruitlands. It is the sort of thing Melville

takes great delight in satirizing in his short story "The Apple-Tree Table," where two children announce to their family that everything in nature is a spirit. But if the meaning of life is a familiar story with a twist ending, that still leaves open the question of what is life. Peabody tries to answer this more fully in "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man."

The idea for the title of Peabody's first Christology, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" was given to her by her "dear friend." The first letter begins, "Your so often expressed conviction, that I have the power of describing 'the life of Christ in the soul of man,' has at last impelled me to tell you more particularly, the plan I had sketched."[22] The author tells her unnamed correspondent, William Ellery Channing, of her intent to share her ideas through letters since, she utters with some self-deprecation, "I have command of no other style than the epistolary; and, indeed, that style alone admits freedom enough to suit thoughts so undigested as mine." This apology, defending the author's use of letters, may have reminded her correspondent of an article he published in the August 1815 number of *The Christian Disciple*. Discussing Hannah More's *An Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of St. Paul* (1815), Channing argues that the style of St. Paul's letters are best understood in their historical context as occasional writing and not theological discourse. "Christianity we must always remember is a temper and a spirit, rather than a doctrine," Channing preaches, hence, "It is the life of God in the soul of man."[23]

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[22] [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody], "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man—A Letter—No. 1" *Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer,* Vol. I, no. 21 (21 May 1835): 161.

[23] William Ellery Channing, "Remarks on an 'Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of St. Paul, by Miss More.'" *The Christian Disciple and Theological Review*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (August 1815): 236-37.

Channing's description of Christianity, perhaps an allusion to Henry Scougal's 1677 classic of the same name, is not unlike Peabody's own theology of feeling.[24] Christianity is the religion of the heart that "consists of practical truths" communicated in the "freedom" of the epistle, "the very form which accords with the genius of such a religion, not as a speculation of the intellect but as a living principle, a sentiment of the heart" ("Remarks" 237). In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul describes the life of Christ Jesus in the soul as an indwelling of the holy spirit, proclaiming that "the Spirit *is* life."[25] The letters of Paul, "with all their abrupt transitions and occasional obscurities," are examples, Channing proclaims, of "genuine Christianity." Much like the letter Scougal wrote for his friend, Peabody had something practical in mind herself—a kind of "practical manual" for Christians. The insecurities she expresses about her own style, with its tendency for vagueness, might be her identifying with St. Paul's style. That vagueness, I contend, stems from an indeterminacy of doctrine. Indeed, the desire to moderate some of the perceived excesses of liberal Unitarianism with orthodox Calvinism shows how Transcendentalism is more attuned to the thought of mainstream Unitarianism though so often framed as a secularizing revolt of the former against the latter.

"I do not believe in any life of Christ in the soul, which may destroy the individuality of a man," Peabody avows, "and make him no longer the subject of his own reason, feelings and

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[24] Peabody's title, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man," is similar to the Puritan devotional by Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677). It also draws a comparison to the work of David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu* (1835). While it is doubtful that Peabody would have been influenced by *Leben Jesu* prior to 1836 when the book was made available in the United States, Theodore Parker's 20,000-plus-word review of the German work of higher criticism in 1840 had a profound effect on religious thought in New England. Strauss's "The Life of Jesus" argued that the Gospel accounts mythologized the historical Jesus and that the importance of Christianity is found in the idea of God in man. The indwelling of Christ in humanity did not require miracles, but it would require more than self-culture and self-reliance alone, and it was certainly not idealism in 1835, 1841, or at any other time in the history of Transcendentalism. Peabody's "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" shares this opinion but would not do away with the historical Jesus.

[25] Romans 8:10.

conscience." In other words, there is no annihilating idealism, no Emersonian self. It is the life of Christ in the soul, and not the soul in Christ as the theology of Puritan Calvinist Thomas Shepard once described it. The faculty psychology behind "reason, feelings, and conscience" presupposes a mind that is indelible to the soul as it strives toward moral perfection. Christ's living principle is alive in the present, not in a heaven that is "a consciousness of duty performed" in a place where nothing ever happens. No, instead, Christ continues to fulfil his "duty" to humanity. "That it is in the individual Jesus Christ alone, that this life can be adequately studied," Peabody contends, so that by "fully comprehending his character," one "can receive the ever growing and ever recurring impulse to the Christian life."

Peabody's Christ is the social Christ, the Christ of humanity. "Living in a world full of interesting beings, to whom we are connected by the ties of family, the bonds of gratitude, the sweet chords of fancy and imagination," centers on familial sociability, even "while intercourse with them is troubled by the imperfections of human communication, and the innumerable accidents of circumstance, and we are separated from them in a thousand painful ways, and sometimes by mere misunderstandings." What is needed is "a landmark by which to try our own and others' friendship—a rock, round which our human affections may rally—a sun of human virtues, which may enlighten them and ourselves; and all this," Peabody attests, "we have in Jesus, who at the same time sanctions the human feeling that connects us thus with others of our race, by cultivating in us and with us the same sentiment and relation."

Christ is the comforter, the paraclete. "We need a friend who seems to have almost as little relation to time as God himself," Peabody speculates. Miracles or no, Jesus is the eternal demiurge because of his relationship to time, and thus is humanity perfected in its affective relationship with God through Christ. The prophet adds that, "it is all the better and more

elevating that to realize his very existence requires a constant exercise of some of our noblest faculties, and yet does not require so great a reach of mind as does communion with Him whose very nature is incomprehensible." He is not only the great teacher of perfect virtue; he is the infinite made finite in order for humanity to conceive of their relation to the eternal order. To know God is to know affectively by internal evidences.

Thus informed, the study of Christ is understood as a practical endeavor. "To study Christianity in any way must be beneficial," insists Peabody. "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" is a "manual of practical religion." An example of such practical religion might be the Berry Street Conference that Peabody and other young women attended in the1820s for Bible study under the tutelage of Channing. Another example offered by Peabody is the writing of Indian Unitarian Ram Mohun Roy, who was one of Channing's correspondents. "To study the precepts of Jesus, as they were drawn up by Ram Mohun Roy for his countrymen, must, especially to the heathen, be pouring a flood of light upon the mind and heart," Peabody exclaims (161). The famous Indian religious and social reformer incorporated some of the Hindu, Muslim, and Deist beliefs of India into his Unitarian teachings to make Christian faith more accessible to those with no cultural knowledge of it, causing many to question his commitment to Unitarianism.[26] But it was by this practical way of disseminating Christianity that Roy was able to enact social change in India such as the abolition of child marriages and sati, the practice of self-sacrifice among widowed women. However good the work of Roy would be for his native Bengal, "to receive the whole benefit of Christianity," Peabody states, "we should receive it from him in whom it is revealed, from whom it breathes, whose actions are its commentary, and whose death has explained its most vital truth." The life of Jesus is necessary

[26] Emerson found Roy an inspiring figure, as did Channing who corresponded with him.

for devotion to Christ. It is the person of Jesus who stands behind the historical Jesus, and without the historical Jesus, Christianity would not exist.

"But what is more to the purpose," Peabody clarifies, "is the conduct and language of the apostles," for they knew Jesus personally and "seem to think it of the very first importance to awaken an individual, personal affection for Jesus." Christian life unfolds in the heart when the object of devotion is the character of Jesus. Peabody defends the title of her work, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man," and claims "there is certainly nothing mystical in the idea of this power, which is given to the truth of God, by its being identified with the very life of a being whom we may believe to care for us" (162). The "pure metaphysics" of God's love is felt when one succeeds in some virtuous action. This is how Christ is internalized, becoming a principle of both self and, in Christian fellowship, the other. Therefore, devotion is self-devotion and service to others. This seems paradoxical to some, Peabody says, and unintelligible, which is why actions are more practical than words in conveying truth. Drawing analogies to Plato and Areopagus, Crito and Plato—anticipating her mystic "Vision" of several years later—Peabody believes that "actions alone are intelligible," even for the ineffable experience of moral truth, since words can be misunderstood or ignored by those who would refuse to hear.

The second letter on "The Life of Christ" picks up where the first leaves off. The first concludes with a rejection of the doctrine of substitution upon which Peabody comments in the second, explaining her views on salvation and the idea of Jesus as savior. When the apostles speak of being saved by Christ's sufferings, Peabody takes this as a figurative and not physical salvation from eternal damnation. "My reason cries to be saved from doubt, perplexity, and contradiction, and my conscience would be saved from distress and shame and self-torture," yet this is not all (171). "It is not a merely negative salvation that I want. I look upon Christ and a

new light bursts upon me." Later, she says, "From the darkest and hardest materials of the chaos of human life, he formed a sun of righteousness, which rose to the noontide of the moral heaven, sending its beams, from the east even unto the west, promising to enlighten, in the revolutions of time, the uttermost parts of the earth." Cosmic optimism emanates from the sun, the correspondence between the spirit and physical nature. The revelation that the character of Christ is within all of man is Peabody's goal in her practical Christology: "Every human being has his sphere, in which he too may seek and save, though the spheres of each may differ from that of Jesus, as does the dew-drop that sparkles on the lawn and unlocks the springs of beauty in the soul that comes within its tiny sphere, from that of the sun in the heavens."[27]

The Christian is an artist who studies Christ like "the statue which enchants the world"—the Venus de Medici, to be precise, to model their moral character. Peabody says,

> So by the indestructible laws of the human mind, in contemplating Jesus in his work, the moral art which produces the perfect Christian life, springs in the soul, and sends forth streams whose course is marked by verdure, and flowers, and fruit, such as may ripen in that climate. We imitate him only as the artist imitates the masters of art, by going up to the same inspirations.

Peabody further stipulates that it is only through the imitation of Christ that "we comprehend the whole vast subject of moral action, and realize in our souls the vision and the faculty divine." In her preceding example, Peabody's Christ is neither male nor female. Christianity is the source of vital power that makes possible the beauty of the created world. Likewise, salvation is attained through the perfection of one's soul which issues forth the same truth, beauty, and goodness as that of Peabody's romantic image of the stream.

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[27] The closing for the letter, "Yours most truly," was typical of Peabody.

Peabody approaches a definition of *the life*, that is, the life of Christ, in the third and shortest of the letters in the series.[28] It begins by describing the way that God communicates this life by a kind of immersion of the mind in spirit. “The Divinity, from time immemorial, has himself come to the mind of man, through the crevices, as it were,” something fluid like steam or oil, one imagines, “of that vast machine which He did not intend should be so complete as to shut up the creature from the Creator, as in a prison house,” a mind cut off from society and left to suffer in despair (185-86). Then Peabody turns,

> at last to the concentration of the whole counsel of God, to the full manifestation of the capacities of our nature in him who appeared according to presentiments and predictions which had never been understood, and vindicated the freedom of the will and the paternal character of the Creator from all reproach, proving that the material universe was the servant of the Son of man, and that he was also the Lord of the institutions divinely appointed for his education, and that death itself was but an accident which he could surmount; and who, at last, having shown what the life of man should be on earth, ascended into the heavens — an ever present witness to the all crowning truth, that man is immortal, and progress is unceasing. (186)

The personhood of Jesus testifies to the life to which the soul may ascend. Yet the perfection of the soul in such figures as Socrates, Plato, and Crito are, for Peabody, the exception; the rule, she thinks, ought to be of a “perfection more general than theirs.” Christ’s will is “filial, intelligent and free, and calling on us to believe that we are his brethren, and that the spirit of God within us

[28] Letter number three acknowledges a debt to William Wordsworth in the previous letter. Both Peabody and Channing each maintained correspondence with the English poet for nearly two decades. See Margaret Neussendorfer, “Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to William Wordsworth: Eight Letters, 1825-1845,” *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1984), 181–211.

can turn all the materials of nature into some form of excellence, that this is a beauty and a glory for every individual, and that if he is the most beautiful and the most glorious, it is because he has worked the form of his life out of a more difficult quarry than he has left to any one of his followers." The miracle of Christ's incarnation speaks to a fundamental truth about the meaning of the world, that the material is shaped by the spiritual.

With the third letter, published on June 11, 1835, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" series would pause, occasioned by the cessation of the *Boston Observer*, until it was resumed in the new merged publication, the *Christian Register and Boston Observer*. The fourth letter, divided into two parts and published on September 19 and September 26, 1835, presumed to say something more about the life of Christ. Instead, it shifts to a discussion of "the race," and "the moral atmosphere in which Jesus was born" (26 September 1835, 1). Peabody offers her speculations about Asia, the veneration of Greece and Rome, and the Hebrews in the context of the providential manifestation of Christ among the nations of the world. While the letter complements Peabody's later writings on history, it is an abrupt ending to the series that promised to be a practical manual for Christianity. Still, "The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man" anticipates the writings of other Transcendentalists, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker, who speak about the divinity of man, and Christ as a social principle, the theology of which Peabody would explore in greater depth in her essay "A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society."

Brook Farm and the Heaven of Association

Elizabeth Peabody's longtime friend, the radical Boston reformer and renowned psychic medium Anna Quincy Thaxter Parsons, celebrated her seventieth birthday in June of 1883. The two women had known each other for nearly half of the nineteenth century, during which time

they worked tirelessly alongside other Unitarians on behalf of their devoted causes.[29] Peabody and Parsons had been especially interested in the social and religious reforms that were implemented during the 1840s at Brook Farm. The two were frequent visitors to the short-lived Transcendentalist utopian community, and each published essays about the place one of them called her "heaven."[30]

Peabody's birthday gift to her friend was a copy of Jones Very's *Poems* (1883), published earlier that year, in which she inscribed with one of her own poems.[31] Like that of the mystic Transcendentalist Very, Peabody's stanza of sanguine verse is an encounter with the divine, one that epitomizes Elizabeth Peabody's eternal optimism and Unitarian faith:

> What is Beauty but God as He comes to the eye,
>
> And Hope but God present in sorrow?
>
> Beauty fades with the light, and Hope seems to die,
>
> But God will be Heaven tomorrow. [32]

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[29] See Helen Dwight Orvis, "A Note on Anna Q. T. Parsons" in Marianne Dwight Orvis, *Letters from Brook Farm, 1844-1847* (1928), xiii-xv. Parsons performed what she called "character readings" by placing a letter to her forehead and channeling the personality of the hand that wrote it. Among her many reform activities, Parsons was a founder of both the Boston Union of Associationists and the Woman's Associative Union as well as a member of William Henry Channing's Boston Religious Union of Associationists. For more on these societies, see Sterling F. Delano, "The Boston Union of Associationists (1846-1851): 'Association is to Me the Great Hope of the World," *Studies in the American Renaissance* (1996): 5-40.

[30] Parsons addressed some of the letters she wrote during her stays as having been sent from "Heaven." See Orvis, *Letters from Brook Farm, 1844-1847* (1928), xiv.

[31] Very, it will be remembered, was the mystic Transcendentalist who famously visited Peabody at her home in Salem, Massachusetts, and announced that he was the Second Coming of Christ. Peabody's letter about the Very incident is the best historical account of that fateful day in September 1838. Peabody had first met Very the previous year. She introduced him to Ralph Waldo Emerson and both were members of the Transcendentalist Club with Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau, among others. See Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to William P. Andrews, 12 November 1880, *EPPL* 404-409.

[32] "Elizabeth Peabody Centennial." *Woman's Journal*, 35, 19 (May 7, 1904), 149. This poem appears in a report from the Peabody centennial celebration held on May 2nd, 1904, by the New England Women's Club of Boston. Speakers at the event included Julia Ward Howe, Ednah D. Cheney, F. B. Sanborn, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and one of Peabody's former kindergarten pupils, Eva Channing, granddaughter of Peabody's friend and mentor, Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing. Channing first read a tribute to Peabody written by Anna Q. T. Parsons

The heroic quatrain affirms Peabody's sentiment about the hereafter as well as the here and now. God is not an inaccessible figure of supernatural power but an immanent presence that is seen and felt in Romantic ideals of "Beauty" and "Hope." The experience of loss and doubt is temporary. Out of the darkness, the Millennium will come—not through a face-to-face encounter with a personal God in a celestial home, but, in the eternal revolutions of the earth, a God who will be "Heaven tomorrow."

It is the same religious striving for a "heaven tomorrow" that made Peabody so devoted to Brook Farm. There, on the old Ellis dairy farm in West Roxbury, Massachusetts, founders Sophia and George Ripley hoped to create harmony between leisure and labor in the form of a joint-stock, agrarian-pastoral experiment known as "Association." When the Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education began, Association meant a form of religious communitarianism that was unique to the United States. Toward the end of the 1840s, however, Association took on a more secular connotation as it became more closely associated with the many communes or "phalansteries" modeled after the social theories of French philosopher Charles Fourier. Likewise, Brook Farm would start out as a place of spiritual seeking before it was eventually remodeled after the Fourierist system of secularized industry. For both women and men, the ideal society that Brook Farm represented was a version of heaven, where one could "enter immediately into the immortal life" ("Community" 114). Optimistic millennialists like Peabody hoped to usher in a golden age for humanity when Christ would return. And nowhere in the 1840s was the promise of a millennium more hopeful than at Brook Farm, for it

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before reading the quatrain which Peabody had inscribed in a copy of Jones Very's *Poems* (1883) that she presented to Parsons. This would date the poem to approximately 1883. The verse was copied by Peabody for an admirer in a manuscript dated May 16, 1886, now in the author's possession. A slightly different version of this poem can be found in the holdings of the American Antiquarian Society. See Elizabeth Palmer Peabody Papers, 1843-1867, Mss. miscellaneous boxes P, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

was indeed, to both its members and its supporters, heaven on earth. This idea of heaven was not one to be found in the *afterlife*, but rather one that would begin in the *life after*, that is, the life that humanity will enjoy after the work of social, religious, and perhaps even economic reform began in earnest.

Peabody's postmillennial understanding of George and Sophia Ripley's utopian experiment—in both her praise and criticism— exercised a dominant influence on the public's perception of Brook Farm in its early years. Her writings on the association are some of her most effective. They are also significant as arguments for a more expansive, egalitarian, and economic concept of religious community than those found in Boston's Unitarian churches or other religious communities. Though its eventual transition to a Fourierist phalanx would challenge her ideas about association, Peabody saw in Brook Farm the potential for a perfect society that would reflect her own idea of heaven, and offer a glimpse, as she calls it, of Christ's idea of society.

On November 9, 1840, a month after announcing, for a second time, his intention to resign his Unitarian pulpit, George Ripley writes his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson to ask if he will join him in a new venture. Ripley assures Emerson that,

> Our objects are to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists; to combine the thinker and the worker, as far as possible, in the same individual; to guarantee the highest mental freedom, by providing all with labor, adapted to their tastes and talents, and securing to them the fruits of their industry; to do away with the necessity of menial services, by opening the benefits of education and the profits of labor to all. (*Transcendentalism* 308)

The goal of this joint-stock community was something that could not be easily attained in the market economy of an industrialized United States: "a society of liberal, intelligent, and cultivated persons, whose relations with each other would permit a more simple and wholesome life."

Having resigned his own pulpit in 1832, Emerson shared Ripley's dissatisfaction with organized religion but had not gone so far as to propose an alternative.[33] He also saw no reason to uproot his young family from their home in Concord and move nearly twenty miles away. George Ripley tried to persuade his friend by confessing that he, too, might like to "have a city of God" all to himself if he did not feel that by starting an association he might do "a great social good" instead (*Transcendentalism* 310). Emerson, however, ultimately declined Ripley's invitation. While he had "some remains of skepticism in regard to the general practicability of the plan," Emerson cited personal reasons for not committing: "the Community is not good for me" (*Transcendentalism* 311). Ripley would not convince his friend Emerson to leave his beloved Concord for a community that was partly inspired by his writings; nevertheless, Ripley was able to convince others to join himself and his wife in their endeavor.

Similar to Emerson, Peabody was also unable to join the Ripleys in their communitarian experiment, though she would become its strongest supporter. Parsons notes that "[Peabody] was in constant relation" with the Brook Farm community, and that "her rooms were an attractive resting place for many of the members when in Boston, and a place where they always found themselves kindly welcomed" ("Reminiscences of Miss Peabody" 451). Some of those members belonged to the Transcendentalist Club. Social and religious reforms had become popular topics

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[33] Emerson's essay on "Worship" would be his formal response to the problem of religion without a church. See Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Worship," in *CW* VI.

of conversation at the meetings of the Transcendental Club, which by this time had started using the front parlor of Peabody's West Street book store as a gathering place. At two of the final meetings of the coterie, Peabody writes, in a letter addressed to her friend and future Brook Farmer John Sullivan Dwight, "Mr. Ripley said his say—very admirably too—& making no small impression of the reality of the evils he deplores—the key of which is—that the ministers & church are upheld in order to uphold a society vicious in its foundations—but which the multitude desire should continue in its present conditions" (*EPPL* 245). Ripley believed that the church, as an institution, was failing humanity. The more conservative Unitarian minister Henry Hedge, meanwhile, defended the church against Ripley's accusations, "but he yielded to Mr Ripley that the Social Principle was yet to be educated—the church of Humanity yet to grow." (*EPPL* 246).[34] This idea of moral sympathy, the "Social Principle," was of central importance to Peabody. Equally important was the cultivation of the soul through education that would bring about a "church of Humanity," which Peabody along with her Transcendentalist friends prophesized.

Peabody's social principle is not unlike those principles of religious communities that predate Brook Farm. Not long before the advent of Brook Farm, the Shakers, also known as the Millennial Church, were reaching the height of their success in the United States. Around that same time, however, Robert Owen had established a new kind of community in New Harmony, Indiana, the former home of the Rappites, a new labor cooperative community that was not organized around religion. The Hopedale Community had more recently embarked on a venture not unlike that of Brook Farm but was decidedly sectarian. This, Peabody says, makes Hopedale

[34] Frederic Henry Hedge was a conservative Transcendentalist who remained a Unitarian preacher unlike Emerson and Ripley who resigned their pulpits.

not a community so much as another kind of church. While her social principle appeals strongly to Unitarian perfectionism, Peabody herself insists upon a non-sectarian, "world-embracing" community in Christ that might also resonate with other postmillennial Christians ("A Glimpse" 226).

Like many other religious associations in the early nineteenth century, Brook Farm embodied two ideas of heaven. The first of these intertwined and non-mutually exclusive ideas is the Millennium. "The most potent religious underpinning of communitarianism was," according to Carl J. Guarneri, "a widespread expectation of an imminent kingdom of heaven on earth" (68). Brook Farm's founders were similarly optimistic. In his ordination sermon for John Sullivan Dwight that previous summer, Ripley asked the congregation, "Where is the community, in which the order of society, the general tone of morality, the every-day dealings between man and man, are based on the new commandment which the Redeemer gave to his disciples?"[35] The next day, Ripley submitted his first letter of resignation to his church to seek this community for himself at Ellis Farm in West Roxbury, one based on the golden rule of Christ.

Brook Farm's other idea of heaven was more romantic. Sophia Ripley's description of Ellis Farm, for example, is nothing short of a pastoral dream world:

> Our farm is a sweet spot…We are nearly two miles from any creature, but one or two quiet farmer's families, & do not see so many persons here in a month as we do in one morning at home. Birds & trees, sloping green hills & hay fields as far as the eye can reach- & a brook clear running, at the foot of a green bank covered with shrubbery opposite our window, sings us to our rest with its quiet tune & changes its morning song to the rising sun. Many dreamy days have been my portion here—roaming about the

[35] George Ripley, *The Claims of the Age on the Work of the Evangelist* (1840), 12.

> woods, or lying half asleep under the nut trees on the green knoll near by –or jogging along on my white pony for miles & miles through the green lanes & rural roads which abound in our neighborhood—where you meet no well dressed gentlemen & ladies taking their afternoon airing, & hardly a solitary hay-cart or foot passenger –Even George lies for hours on the green banks, reading Burns, & whistling to the birds who sing to him.[36]

Brook Farm was assuredly a place of enchantment, where one could escape the intrusive populace of the city for the natural beauty of rural New England. Members and visitors would be equally seduced by its rustic charm.

This idyll of country life was enough to entice John Sullivan Dwight eventually to leave his brief ministry at Northampton in Western Massachusetts to become the master of the Brook Farm school. But as Dwight knew quite well,

> Sweet is the pleasure
> Itself cannot spoil!
> Is not true leisure
> One with true toil?[37]

Dwight imagines a heavenly state where labor and rest prepare one for the eternal glorification of God. While on earth, however, one must necessarily labor in order to enjoy a respite from it. This is the essence of Unitarian postmillennialism. "Pleasure" is not the spoiled fruit of idleness but of "toil." These agrarian metaphors return the idea of self-culture to its roots in a sense, that

[36] Sophia Willard Dana Ripley, letter to John Sullivan Dwight, from West Roxbury, Massachusetts, August 1, 1840 (Boston Public Library, Dwight Collection); quoted in Henrietta Dana Raymond, *Sophia Willard Dana Ripley: Co-Founder of Brook Farm* (1994), 26-27.

[37] John Sullivan Dwight, "Sweet is the Pleasure," *The Dial*, 1:1 (July 1840): 22.

is, self-cultivation. The Brook Farmers would learn firsthand that farming is more than harvesting metaphors. It's work that would be necessary if they were going to thrive.

The balance between labor and rest was both a practical and a spiritual matter. Whether one went there to bring about Christ's kingdom or to enjoy the sweet songs of birds and the poetry of Robert Burns, or both or neither, those who chose to become part of the association needed to work. This was the case for all with the exception of those few members like Charles Newcomb who could pay for their room and board. Brook Farm promised to take away the drudgery of daily life and give more ample time to life in the spirit.

The spiritual economy of the association was Peabody's primary concern in her first of published writing on Brook Farm, which took the form of a letter published in *The Monthly Miscellany of Religion and Letters* in May 1841. It was one of several such notices that appeared in print in the months leading up to the association's founding. Peabody's letter, ostensibly written to a friend of hers in England, begins by quoting George Ripley: "'And what hinders,--say these associates,--that we should have an organization of society on Christian ideas, if those who have these ideas only come out from the world, and communicate and live;--live wholly,--live in the body by a constant increase in health, live in the spirit by a complete unfolding of the heart, intellect, and moral nature?'" ("Community at West Roxbury" 113-14). The Brook Farmers felt that the hinderance was a system of labor in the increasingly industrialized and mercantilist economy of New England.

In the interests of health and happiness, Brook Farm was egalitarian in its principles, each doing their share for the common good—or, rather, it aspired to be such, though this was not how it turned out. Peabody notes that the members of the Brook Farm Association agreed that manual labor should be divided and shared amongst all, "that the labour of society might be

lessened by machinery and cooperation of numbers, while the desirable fruits of labour would not be in the least sacrificed; that there was no need of any drudge in society, provided there was no drone" ("Community at West Roxbury" 114). Peabody, however, had her concerns about the distribution of labor, as she soon saw that some members, particularly women, did more work than others. Many drudged, however, women for the large part, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, too, who as stakeholder shoveled manure with the hopes of getting a return on his investment. Others droned by paying their rent in some other way. For them, Brook Farm was a kind of resort where one could escape the city for the pleasures of the country. It would seem that despite its revolutionary pretenses as an alternative to the capitalism that had existed in Boston since John Winthrop shared his "Modell of Christian Charity," that exchanging of the old social structure for a more egalitarian one proved challenging.

Many of the Brook Farmers attended services at the nearby churches of Theodore Parker and Orestes A. Brownson, Transcendentalist ministers who were preaching on reforming labor practices.[38] As Peabody observes, "It seems to me that here we see brought about, in the most peaceable manner in the world, that very rectification of things which Mr. Brownson in his Article on the Labouring Classes is understood to declare will require a bloody revolution, a war such as the world has not heard of; viz., that no child shall be born richer or poorer than another, except by inward gift of God, but all shall inherit from society a good education and an independent place" ("Community at West Roxbury" 116). A world of peace, harmony, and moral ascension is possible, Peabody believes, if humanity moves away from the American capitalist system of competition toward a more socialist model of cooperation.

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[38] By 1845, William Henry Channing began offering Unitarian services at Brook Farm on "pulpit rock."

Brook Farm was where Peabody's "social principle" was put to the test. Her letter on "The Community at West Roxbury, Mass." could be taken as a narrative account of the Brook Farm "Articles of Association" that were drawn up during the previous winter, save for the preamble to their informal constitution.[39] The language of this preamble is careful not to frame its undertaking as a religious one. It yokes both classical and Christian moral virtues of "wisdom & purity" and "justice & love," while appealing to traditional Yankee virtues of "industry" and "simplicity" and those Unitarian values of "physical, intellectual, & moral education" and "spiritual progress."[40]

The vision is one of harmony—social and spiritual, but not religious. The Ripleys certainly had a Christian community in mind as did many of its original members who were Unitarians. Yet unlike most other associations before it, Brook Farm did not make any religion or form of worship compulsory. Nor did it exclude members of different faiths by instituting a religious test for membership. Such a test was required at Adin Ballou's aforementioned community of "practical Christians" at Hopedale, a Massachusetts commune—one of approximately 200 such communities in the United States during the nineteenth century—where members put into practice their Christian beliefs. The Brook Farm founders rejected a religious test for membership, which was opposed to their notion of an egalitarian community. Thus it was written into the "Articles of Association" that there would be no such test confirming a Christian faith but, as Sterling Delano points out, "Peabody makes no reference to Article II in her letter almost certainly because she feared that the public would tar Brook Farm by charging that its

[39] George Willis Cooke, *John Sullivan Dwight: Brook-Farmer, Editor, and Critic of Music* (1898), 51.

[40] "Articles of Agreement and Association between the Members of the Institute for Agriculture and Education," Massachusetts Historical Society, Ms. N-2108.

members were ‘Separatists’ and ‘Come-Outers’ and thus opposed to institutional and traditional Christianity.”[41]

Peabody offers her own interpretation of Brook Farm’s mission statement, reframing it according to her understanding of the association’s Christian foundation. An ideal association is one that will alleviate the toil and suffering of humanity through “brotherly cooperation.” Peabody asks, “How dare I sacrifice not only my own, but others’ health in sequestrating myself from my share of bodily labour, or neglecting a due mental cultivation? How dare I have superfluities, when others are in want? How dare I oppose the unfolding of the spiritual progress of my whole race, by all the force of my personal selfishness and indolence?” (“Community at West Roxbury” 114). In doing so, Peabody raises the question, “is it not the sin against the Holy Ghost, with this newfound insight, to hesitate to enter immediately upon the immortal life?” It is not merely for selfish individual reasons that one would join with an association but, if not for the charitable love of all humanity, at least to have an alliance with like-minded Christians mobilized as it were by the same affective Transcendentalism that Peabody professes.

Brook Farm reflected Peabody’s millennial vision of a heaven on earth. The hereafter does not begin hereafter but in the here and now. It begins not with just faith and hope but the charity that Christ demands of his followers. Association, in Peabody’s vision, must be something more than just a gated community of like-minded, middle-class liberal Christians. The egalitarian agricultural association must instead commit itself to the welfare of all who “associate,” and be open to receiving others into the fold of varying socioeconomic status. The directive that Peabody has in mind, which differs from one Ripley had alluded to in his sermon

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[41] Sterling F. Delano, *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia* (2004), 63-64.

of May 1840, will form the basis of her social theology in "A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society."

In its commitment to individuality, education, and family, Brook Farm would ultimately rehabilitate the concept of Association for Peabody, as well as for those interested parties who might be on the fence about joining: "I have lost entirely my horror of *community*,—now that I have found it can be so restricted, as to leave personal liberty and family integrity sacred" ("Community at West Roxbury" 118). "If it succeeds," she anticipates that, "two of the most important problems of human life will be settled, viz. the reconciliation of labour with cultivation and elegance of mind and manners, and the independence of the Faculty of education" ("Community at West Roxbury" 118). Peabody's idea of Brook Farm is a Unitarian's dream of heaven, where social harmony and self-improvement go hand-in-hand. "I think too it can be proved the true church;--but of that another time."

"A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society"

"A Glimpse of Christ's Idea of Society" was published in *The Dial* in October 1841. Peabody does not make it about Brook Farm specifically (that essay would come later); she does, however, make the argument that Brook Farm is modeled after Christ's social teaching.[42] The article also exemplifies Peabody's postmillennial understanding of heaven as a place of harmony between leisure and labor, industry and art, men and women.

In the beginning of her essay, Peabody points out that, "The common mode of studying the Idea of Jesus Christ, with respect to Society, has uniformly been to seek its manifestation in Ecclesiastical History"; that is, the history of the Christian church from its beginnings to the

[42] N.b., Peabody would later rename the essay as the "Brook Farm Interpretation of Christ's Idea of Society" in her volume of collected works. See Peabody, *Last Evening with Allston, and Other Papers* (1886).

present, but that even the Apostolic church was, in Peabody's estimation, "below the mark at which Jesus aimed, and really of little consequence to us, as far as our present modes of action are concerned" ("A Glimpse" 314). Churches were formed in order to spread the good news of Jesus, but they are not, Peabody says, modeled after Christ's social teachings: "with how much or how little ultimate success, as to his aim of establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth, the past history and present condition of Christendom may show" ("A Glimpse" 314-15). Since then, the "extraneous authority" that the Catholic and Protestant churches have imposed on the readings of scripture have obscured this essential fact of Christ's ministry. And it is Peabody's understanding that, "we should not do small justice to the divine soul of Jesus of Nazareth as to admit that it was a main purpose of his to found it, or that when it was founded, it realized His idea of human society" ("A Glimpse" 215).

Peabody makes it clear from that outset that the ideal society of Jesus is not possible without Christ. She argues that Christ calls for the radical reorganization of society based upon Christ's example: "No sooner is it surmised that the kingdom of heaven and the Christian Church are the same thing; and that this thing is not an association *ex parte* society, but a reorganization of society itself, on those very principles of Love to God and Love to Man which Jesus Christ realized in his own daily life, than we perceive the Day of Judgment for society is come, and all the words of Christ are so many trumpets of doom" ("A Glimpse" 218). That by living as Jesus lived, many believe, the body of the church would bring about a heaven on earth for themselves. Peabody, on the other hand, argues that Christ's kingdom *is* the church and that life on earth is coterminous with heaven. When this perfected state is realized by all of humanity, society as one knows it will be transfigured.

Peabody states that Christ's idea "must be sought as he sought it, in the soul itself" ("A Glimpse" 216). It is through a gradual revelation of the soul to itself that Peabody declares are the cause and effect of the flourishing of a state of harmony. In other words, social change is a positive feedback loop that begins in self-culture, nurtures the social principle in the soul, and expands outward into the world, which in turn amplifies the progress of humanity. Peabody biographer Bruce Ronda claims, "Peabody preserved her sense of individual power and agency against those who, like Orestes Brownson, would see social problems as requiring only collective solutions; and she preserved her sense of the need for social structures that nurture and protect these fragile selves, against radical individualists who, like Emerson, feared social constraint" (200).

The progress of society is equally dependent upon spiritual development of the individual, but it is also dependent on the Christ. Peabody contends that one need not be a minister (read: a man) to interpret the Bible with authority. The Gospels may be read as "reminiscences" and the Book of Revelation as a poem. They are, along with the epistles of Paul, "the divinest efflorescence of human nature through the medium of literature," of which there has been no "criticism" of them as such ("A Glimpse" 215). And as literature, a "self-dependent" spirit (e.g., a self-reliant Emerson) or an "unlearned girl" from Salem have the same agency over their interpretation as theologians. Hers is a Christianity of humanity and not a theology, at least in a conventional sense.

"Hitherto two errors have prevailed, either singly or in combination," according to Peabody. "One has led men to neglect social organization wholly, or regard it as indifferent; and to treat of an isolated cultivation of the soul, as if it could be continuously independent of all extraneous influence." Social organizations in the religious life of New England suffer, perhaps,

from a religious culture there that had, since the seventeenth century, cultivated a piety of introspection. By neglecting social life, Peabody counters, one neglects one's duty to other souls, "in each of which is the depth of eternity" (217).

That said, Peabody goes one step further than her mentor, the Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing, by extending the concepts of self-culture and the social principle in a theological defense of religious association, querying "what is meant when we say we will seek the Idea of human society in the soul itself?" Peabody postulates, "We can mean nothing else than this: what the soul craves from the social principle, to cherish and assist its perfection, is to be 'the light of all our seeing' upon the subject." "The Problem of the present age is human society," according to Peabody, "not as a rubric of abstract science, but as a practical matter and universal interest; an actual reconciliation of outward organization with the life of the individual souls who associate" (217).

What makes "A Glimpse" a theological defense of association is the way that it reasserts the moral necessity of Christ. That is, Peabody invokes a social theology based upon Christ's commandment given in the parable on the judgment of nations, since "what Church in Christendom, that numbers among its members a pauper or a negro, may stand the thunder of that one word, 'Insamuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these little ones, ye have not done it unto ME'" (218).[43] It is significant that Peabody would choose one of the more universal of Christ's maxims to both defend and promote her ideal of association. The text comes from Christ's parable on the judgment of nations, also known as the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ prophesies that on the Day of Judgement the nations of the world will be separated "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats," with

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[43] Matthew 25:45.

his sheep to the right and his goats to the left. Whereas the goats, selfish and hierarchical in their nature, would not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, etc., the sheep, compassionate and communal, would serve others in love and charity.

Peabody's question asserts the egalitarian truth of Christ's statement. This is as close as she or any Brook Farmer might get to calling for social integration, given that there were no black members of the "Hive," nor were there many non-Unitarians. "While part of Ripley's goal was to unite all classes, membership was dependent on ownership of shares, a provision that limited early Brook Farm's working-class ranks to a few well-to-do farmers and artisans," according to Carl J. Guarneri (49). Nevertheless, Peabody's main concern is that institutional religion could not fulfill Christ's commandment. Surely, if every church could do so, they would have eliminated poverty and slavery. "And yet," she exhorts, "the Church of Christ, the kingdom of heaven, shall not come upon earth, according to our daily prayer, unless not only every church, but every trade, every form of social intercourse, every institution political or other, can abide this test" (218).

Peabody interprets this eschatological prophecy as a universal call to serve one's neighbor. To be of service to humanity is in itself an encounter with Christ and a way to bring about Christ's kingdom. Unlike Ripley, who in his sermon that anticipates his departure for Brook Farm cites Christ's prayer in John 17, another eschatological passage, and to implore the faithful to turn inward and find Christ within themselves, Peabody's social theology calls for love and service to whom Christ identifies as the "least." Peabody is well aware that her audience, the readers and subscribers of the *Dial*, are not those who identify with the "least" of Christ's teaching but those who are expected to serve. They are the ones who are needed to make

the Ripleys' association a success. At the same time, Peabody implies that the community will also need to welcome and support the poor and marginalized who share their utopian vision.

A radical reorganization of society—which includes its religious, social, and political institutions—is not just a prescription for curing society's ills, but it is Peabody's prophecy: "The Soul begins to be conscious to itself … and the kingdom of Heaven, as it lay in the clear spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, is rising again upon vision. Nay, this kingdom begins to be seen not only in religious ecstasy, in moral vision, but in the light of common-sense and the human understanding." This was the dream of Brook Farm: a society where religion and labor would harmonize and elevate humanity. A millennial society will someday, Peabody believes, come closer to realizing the perfect vision of humanity that exists as an idea in the divine mind, though she is quick to concede that this may sound naïve. "We admit that to be human implies to be finite; that to be finite implies obstruction, difficulty, temptation, and struggle," Peabody concedes. Yet, she contends that Jesus believed humanity should make it a "principle to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect; that they could *begin* to love and assist each other," and that the perfect idea would continue to be revealed on earth and in the hereafter (218).

Following Christ's example, one finds that the experience of the divine is not in some other place beyond but within oneself. "If there is a divine principle in man," she admonishes, "it has a right, and it is its duty, to unfold itself from itself" (221). She sees this potential for the ascension of self and society in the Brook Farm association. Before alluding to the Brook Farm community as the realization of Christ's idea, Peabody reproves that living in a "society of competition" that values "the balance of material interests" distorts one's idea of heaven as an account drawn upon after death, that is, "the divine life is not to be for men as they rise," in the materialistic society that was Boston in the 1840s, "but a hope, a dream, a vision to be realized

beyond the grave!" ("A Glimpse" 222). Here Peabody proposes that a new association may be the solution: "There are men and women, however, who have dared to say to one another, Why not have our daily life organized on Christ's own idea?"

Peabody notes at the end that a "postscript" to her essay will give "an account of a specific attempt" at association, what would eventually become known as the Brook Farm Association. In the meantime, she offers her criticism of previous attempts at realizing Christian society. "Religious communities," she contends, "have ever but partially entered into the Idea of Christ. They have all been Churches, *ex parte* society, in some degree. They have been tied up and narrowed by creeds and tests." Moravians, the Shakers, the Rappites all enjoyed success, if only temporary, by living according to the social principle. Yet they all suffered in their sacrifice of family and individuality.

If there is a purpose to society, Peabody believes it to be the glorification of God through one's love of humanity, which is "the perfection of the Individual spiritually":

> This idea clothes itself in various forms. The Abolitionists, the Non-resistants, those so earnest against the imprisonment for debt and capital punishment,— in short, every set of social reformers, come ever and anon to the great principles that there is an infinite worth and depth in the individual soul; that it has temporal interests as well as eternal interests; that it is not only desirable that it should be saved hereafter, but that it live purely and beautifully now; that this world is not only probation, and in a large degree retribution; but it is the kingdom of heaven also, to all who apprehend God and nature truly. ("A Glimpse" 225)

Eternal existence grows in and out of time through an "everlasting unfolding" of the individual soul to itself ("A Glimpse" 226).

Peabody's idea of heaven was not simply a pastoral paradise. It had to be a kind of school. "The final cause of human society," she asserts, "is the unfolding of the individual man into every form of perfection, without let or hindrance, according to the inward nature of each" before drawing the conclusion that "the ground Idea of the little communities" that foster self-culture, "which are the embryo of the kingdom to come, must be Education" ("A Glimpse" 226-27). She uses the metaphor of "unfolding" to map the realization of a soul, blossoming into beauty. It is, as Peabody argues, the "method" of Jesus's life, what he "remands" of the Christian soul. Self-culture makes possible Christ's idea of society but cannot be separated by its social principle. Peabody closes with the recognition that, "to form such a society as this is a great problem, whose perfect solution will take all the ages of time; but let the Spirit of God move freely over the great deep of social existence, and a creative light will come at His word, and after that long Evening in which we are living, the Morning of the first day shall dawn on a Christian society."

Peabody went on to write two more essays on Brook Farm. After the ambitious "Glimpse," she publishes the "Plan of the West Roxbury Community" in January 1842, in which she outlines the guiding principles of Brook Farm and offers her critical opinion of their practical application. "These principles," Peabody reports, "are coöperation in social matters, instead of competition or balance of interests; and individual self-unfolding in the faith that the whole soul of humanity is in each man and woman. The former is the application of the love of man; the latter of the love of God, to life" ("Plan of the West Roxbury Community" 364). Perhaps unsurprisingly, despite their reverence for labor in the common interest, whether one chose to be a poet, teacher, or a "digger of a ditch," different forms of labor, physical as well as intellectual, however sacred or equal one considered them to be, did not make the farm business a success

("Plan of the West Roxbury Community" 363). The fields, better suited for cows than corn, yielded fewer crops than they had expected in that first year. To make matters worse, relatively few of the approximately seventy members had purchased their pledged share of stock in the Association.

By the time Peabody wrote again of Brook Farm, the Association was on its way to becoming a Fourierist phalanx. In Fourier's theories, vis-à-vis the new vision of William Henry Channing, George and Sophia Ripley had found a way to address the financial challenges of their experiment. Peabody had one strong reservation about the new system: "it is our belief, that unless the Fourierist bodies are made alive by Christ, 'their constitution will not march'; and the galvanic force of reaction, by which they move for a season, will not preserve them from corruption" ("Fourierism" 483). Indeed, for reasons other than a lack of religion, the Brook Farm's constitution, in the words of Thomas Carlyle's French revolutionaries, did not march. In 1846, one year after it officially transitioned from an Association to a "phalanx," the phalanx building that was under construction burned to the ground, and taking with it the dreams of Brook Farm.

Peabody moved on from the Brook Farm experiment about the time Anna Parsons was just getting started as its advocate. Parsons became an ambassador for the new Brook Farm, publishing articles in their newspaper *The Harbinger*, including her essay "A Woman's Call to Women." Telling her "sisters" to speak up at the American Union of Associationists meeting, Parsons proselytizes, "Never did a holier cause than Association call on woman to shake the paralysis with which long ages subjection have benumbed her, and with humility,—remembering her untried strength, nevertheless, with unshrinking firmness, waving over her head the banner of Purity and Christian Love,—to join the onward march of Humanity" ("A Woman's Call

to Women" 351). Parsons would make Association her lifelong cause, along with Woman's Rights. Peabody, who once described Brook Farm as an "Embryo university," would carry out her mission as an educator ("Plan of the West Roxbury Community" 361). She continued to write about religious topics over the next several decades, though she is now best remembered as the pioneer of kindergarten in the United States. It is through the cooperative association of learning that is kindergarten, Peabody claims, that one can experience heaven in the "charm of the various individuality and of the refreshing presence of conscience yet unprofaned, as Jesus once said: 'Those were not idle words which came from the lips of Wisdom Incarnate:—Their angels do always behold the face of my Father:' 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven'" (*Moral Culture of Infancy* 18).[44]

"A Vision"

Before she became more involved in Froebel's theories of child education, Peabody would share a personal revelation of the soul's relationship to eternity in Christ in "A Vision" (1843). This mystical essay synthesizes Peabody's body of work to date, bringing her Christologies of self and society, as well her ideas on art and history, together in a vision of the spiritual world—not heaven so much as an ideal realm where persons real and imaginary coexist. This vision of an ideal world registers a change within the religious thought of its author and her Christological understanding. It is Peabody at her most prophetic and the culmination of her affective Transcendentalism.

In an undated letter to Mary Moody Emerson written sometime between 1843 and 1846, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody talks about her difficulties as a religious writer. "I have been trying to think out *into words* that change in my opinions and creed which make me feel that I have

[44] Matthew 18:10, 19:14 quoted in Mann and Peabody, 18.

changed—without having lost that aspect of truth either," she says (*EPPL* 264).[45] The struggle to articulate these new thoughts, Peabody confides in Emerson, was the subject of her essay "A Vision," often considered the most transcendental of her writings. "Occasionally," she admits, when "I have ventured out of that magic circle of Silence which seems to be an Eternity enclosing absolute truth, I find clouds arise, and myself lose the vision." Despite her frustration, Peabody ventures on: "Perhaps I may say with the Germans—It is a becoming—and yet I cannot *exactly*, for there is an objective as well as a subjective condition of life, and neither of the conditions are *the life*" (*EPPL* 265). What truth about life could one know, both intuitive and revealed? What was it that was and was not a "becoming," as Goethe or Schiller might say, both within an individual and shared in a collective Christian experience? The search for an answer, and a definition of *the life*, led Peabody to write about a mystical experience in "A Vision."

"A Vision" describes an ecstatic experience that finds the speaker "sitting in deep reflection over a pamphlet that contains a new definition of life," pondering the organic unity of "death-in-life." "[S]uddenly I found myself taken off my feet," she marvels, "and realized before my eyes at once all Time" (97). The narrator describes the cultural achievements of antiquity, from all corners of the world, art, architecture, and music; yet, the beauty of all civilization quickly degenerates as the world descends into death and chaos around her. Peabody eventually arrives at a knowledge of the world in terms of matter and spirit and in that moment the world is redeemed: "Strange though the assertion may seem, this return of all things from the heights of art, through the freshness of nature, to ancient night, confounding as it was to the sense, seemed to invigorate my fading life with a new faith in Being" (100). The true vision is that with which

[45] Peabody confides in her friend—New Light Congregationalist and Ralph Waldo Emerson's revered aunt Mary—that while she still felt that there was truth to be found in liberal Christianity, she had recently been thinking and feeling more like a Calvinist.

the reader participates, that the world ought not to degenerate into nothingness but enjoy a cosmic knowledge of itself and its being. It is an experience that is ultimately affirmed by the sublime words of Christ as demiurge, spoken in the sweetest "accents of childhood."

There is clearly a Dantean influence to this "Vision." Similar to that of Peabody, the epic trilogy of medieval Italian poet Dante Alighieri, titled "The Vision…" in the English translation by Henry Francis Cary in 1814, is a spiritual quest through the afterlife. But it is his "Vita Nuova" that may be the more influential work. While the reception of Dante is early nineteenth-century Boston is well documented, no one has previously acknowledged the overt allusions to Dante in Peabody's "A Vision"—allusions to both the vision of the spiritual world in the Divine Comedy and the spiritual autobiography that is his *Vita Nuova*, the prefatory prose sonnet that was a favorite of both Fuller and Emerson. Dante is a significant influence on the Transcendentalists both as a model of a poet and for the political effect that he had on many of his American admirers, which included both orthodox Calvinists and liberal Unitarians alike. In appropriating the visions of Dante, "A Vision" expresses Peabody's own intuitive faith and the interpretation of Unitarian aesthetic theory in a way that responds to the intuitive revelations of Fuller and Emerson.

To be sure, the pamphlet alluded to in the beginning of "A Vision," the one "that contains a new definition of life," could easily be the pamphlet that contained Ralph Waldo Emerson's translation of the "Vita Nuova," or the "new life." Dante's "little book" provides the frame story for the *Divine Comedy*. While the *Divine Comedy* was written in Latin, the *Vita* is written in Italian using a prosimetric style of short prose narratives and analysis interspersed with thirty-one lyrics, mostly sonnets, with three long *canzoni*, or songs. Emerson states in his journal that "Dante's Vita Nuova reads like the Book of Genesis, as if written before literature, whilst truth

yet existed" (*JMN* VI: 418). Unsatisfied with the Cary translation, Emerson was inspired to write his own translation of the *Vita*—the first translation of Dante in the United States. Matthew Pearl has said that for Emerson the *Vita Nuova* is "a chronicle of transition and spiritual transformation, that it explores a humanity universal to all. Indeed, the *Vita Nuova* serves as a natural vehicle for transcendentalist ideas of the self."[46] This would explain, perhaps, why Emerson spent approximately three years on the project, and why it was such an interest to the community of Transcendentalists. Margaret Fuller originally gave Emerson a copy of the *Vita* to translate. He then shared his translation with Fuller, who may have in turn shared it through her conversations with her coterie. For example, Robert Richardson observes that, roughly a year after he completed his first draft of his translation, Emerson "reprimanded Caroline Sturgis for copying out what he called his precious blot to send about for others to see. He asked her only to imagine herself turning Milton into French as a school exercise and then having this exercise printed as the new translation of that poet" (*Emerson* 485). Peabody could have also been one of the readers of Emerson's school exercise in translating Dante at a much earlier stage of composition.

It is all the more curious that Peabody, after disavowing herself of mysticism earlier in her career, would jump head first through the looking glass. Her earlier skepticism toward notions of divine revelation is most evident in her reaction to Jones Very. A week after Very was committed to the McLean Asylum in September 1838, Peabody wrote to Emerson expressing her concern "how some people have taken it all—as nothing but *transcendentalism*—which shows how very entirely they do *not* apprehend *the ground* of a *real belief* in *Inspiration*.—What a

[46] Matthew Pearl, "'Colossal Cipher': Emerson as America's Lost Dantean," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society,* no. 117 (1999): 179.

frightful shallowness of thought in the community—that sees no difference between the evidence of the most manifest insanity & the Ideas of Reason!" (*EPPL* 209-10). Peabody makes it clear that she sees a difference between mental illness and mystical visions.

Transcendentalism was, of course, often disregarded as mysticism, and not without good reason. Henry Thoreau once described himself as a "mystic—a transcendentalist—& a natural philosopher to boot" (*PJ* 5:469). James Freeman Clarke's poem "A Dream," published in the *Dial* for April 1841, has a strain of mysticism. Around the same time, Theodore Parker's friend Patience Ford experienced "divine revelation of truth from God," and had fallen in with, according to her cousin Elizabeth Pierce, the "transcendentalists so called."[47] Most famous of all would be Margaret Fuller's allegorical walk back from church one Sunday afternoon. To be sure, the mysticism of the Transcendentalists was, on the whole, a mild-mannered one. According to Lawrence Buell, "theirs was a highly intellectual, almost a hypothetical mysticism, more talked about than felt" (*Literary Transcendentalism* 61). Mystic revelation most often was rational intuitionism rather than something supernatural. Even when it was occasionally ecstatic, Transcendentalist mysticism was a matter of seeing the truth in experience, the unfolding of a truth hidden in the soul.

For Unitarians and Transcendentalists alike, for whom the eternal truths of scripture were to be felt, and for whom religion was so much a state of mind, the indwelling spirit was a way to experience closeness with the divine or a "likeness to God."[48] The Transcendentalists followed

[47] Quoted in M.X. Lesser and Patience Ford, "A Transcendentalist Conversion Narrative," *Massachusetts Historical Review*, 11 (2009) 153, 162.

[48] Preaching on the Pauline doctrine to follow and imitate God, Channing proposes the ultimate perfectibility of man. "To a man who is growing in the likeness to God," Channing proclaims, "faith begins even here to change into vision." The indwelling of the spirit was to Channing "the calmest and clearest truth"; and, mysticism or not, this "sympathy" is so much a divine and supernatural light imparted to the Unitarian soul.

Coleridge in distinguishing reason from understanding. To them, reason was a moral sense. It also represented an aesthetic faculty. As Daniel Walker Howe puts it, "Reason was in harmony with the feelings, especially such finer sentiments as the love of beauty and the love of truth." Thus, "it could be nourished and strengthened by the artistic imagination" (*American Self* 229). This is the essence of Unitarian aesthetic theory: Art cultivates and transports the soul. This is most evident in Peabody's report on the Washington Allston art exhibition in Boston in 1839. Among some of Allston's portraits that Peabody describes was one of Dante's beloved Beatrice. She writes, "I used to go and sit before it day after day, and it unlocked streams of thought and feeling which, as unuttered presentiment, had burdened me before. I felt in it the power of genius to unfold the soul's treasures to itself" (*Last Evening with Allston* 46-47). The inspiration of Beatrice worked by unlocking what was a frustrating, "unuttered presentiment," or that affect that lies under the horizon of sentience.

Returning now to Peabody's "Vision." Like a Jacob's ladder, inspiration shines "a gleam of light upon that mysterious *death in life*," or organicism, the deep ecology of Romanticism; and it is in the comprehension of this profound material oneness that all of humanity shares with the earth back to time immemorial, Peabody marvels at her transport when, "I found myself taken off my feet, and realized before my eyes at once all Time" (97). The organic unity of life forms corresponds with an organicism of culture, or art, literary, and musical forms. She sees persons real and imagined from representations in poetry and romance, and the arts of all time, from pictures and statues to architecture—truth, beauty, and goodness manifest in human civilization. In this ideal realm, "the air seemed pervaded with music,—nay, music seemed the substance of the atmosphere," from ancient music to modern styles. The music did not "plunge the soul into dreams and prophecies and vain longings"; instead, the sensual harmony and melodiousness of

forms acted upon the senses of the hearer and gave “an intoxication of delight.” The music of the vision acts as a guiding metaphor for finding meaning in time.

Moving through time reveals the greatness of ancient civilizations of East and West as well as the degradation of life. “As I mingled in spirit with these Giants of an elder time, I was sensible of impressions of the grandeur of human genius, so much beyond anything I had ever seen of man before,” the narrator says, while also observing the “consequences” of human history (97-98). Peabody’s study of history employed experimental methods of deciphering its cosmic meaning. Anticipating Henry Thoreau’s perception of geological time, Peabody takes a long, syncretic view of the social, political, and religious forces that have shaped human culture.[49] She finds these civilizations remarkable in some ways, but damning in others. She imagines entering their temples, “where worlds beyond worlds open out into the depths of man’s soul; still “‘in the lowest deep a lower deep.’” The line from *Paradise Lost* recalls Satan’s torment as he flies away to the hell within himself, being exiled from heaven. In the Eastern traditions, according to Peabody, individuals lose themselves in the “ecstasy of contemplation,” with the implication being that their societies suffer as a result. “[O]ne common observation I made everywhere in this ancient world,” Peabody declares. “While everywhere were traces of an energy and reach of intelligence so marvelous, from all the monuments of it the life was ever departed or departing. Each succeeding generation was degenerate” (98). The Golden Age nostalgia that sees modern culture as “satire” or “pantomime” as compared to that of the past is a bit patronizing at times, all the more so as when she says, “we pity all the more the slaves, who know not what they do when thus they signalize from what they have fallen.” But if one is to read “A Vision” as a kind of Transcendentalist parody of Dante, in its contemplation of Eastern

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[49] For a study of Henry David Thoreau’s understanding of geological time, see Robert M. Thorson, *Walden’s Shore: Have David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Science* (2014).

religion and Classical "art and policy," then one sees the author moving closer to pure Christ consciousness through a world of allegory that goes beyond the allegory that is the human to being itself.

Moving forward in time, Peabody visits ancient Greece, where she looks upon gods and men and begins to question the conclusions that secular materiality and philosophical idealism make about life. There she sees great artists and leaders appear "phantom-like" and then disappear before her eyes, "as if they were dying away" into their works of creative genius. Likewise, "there was no raw material left, upon which genius might work." The question raised is, "'Do things exist by the death of those through whom they exist?'" Or, perhaps, does the organic unity of the death-in-life world of the real correspond to an ideal truth? The mystic narrator is answered by a disembodied voice. "'Things become spirits…for in them their creators, having realized their highest thought, find eternal repose." A form of idealism in 1841 might imagine the self as a spirit embodied by an object, and that the afterlife is either the continuation of life in other forms or the essence of an individual contained within their works. "'Do you mean…that Orpheus hears never any music but his own? Does Phidias forever wander among his own statuary, and Polygnotus gaze on nought save his own pictures? This were not living, but an eternal death!" To which the voice replies that "the gross sensual substratum," or body, "is removed, and these works have become complete expression." Persons persist in memory but only their creations persist in the material world.

"'But Expression—Beauty,' I protested, 'is not life; it is only an aspect of life.'" The same can be said of philosophy. The descent into the world of thought does not bring with it life everlasting. The fair "Elysium of Art," part spectral *tableaux vivant,* part Platonic ideal, has

nothing of life in it.[50] At this moment Socrates appears and, sounding a lot like Protagoras, announces "Man is the quarry for man." Peabody would answer to the contrary, that man is not the quarry, or measure, for man—except for one, who transcends the boundaries of human experience and ascends into eternal life. "'The forms of society are more perishable than the works of plastic art. This realm of time is a waste of life forevermore,'" cries the mystic, "'Where are the living fountains?'" (99). Ascension must be social, and thus of the body. Peabody, responding to "The Transcendentalist," claims that Emersonian idealism commits the two sins of removing the soul from the source of life and giving the soul a broken vessel in its place.[51] The voice calls out one final time: "'Dost thou still hesitate to come into the land of Thought, and dwell forever among the urns of Beauty?' 'Alas!' said I, 'the land of Thought is dead, and all the denizens thereof.'"

At that, the voice returns to the "Grove of Nightingales," which represents, as it does in Milton, that vainglorious self that would pride itself on its talent and desire the accolades of posterity. It is replaced by another sound, "a deeper music had me in its spell, in which the warbling of those golden throats was lost. This simple and venerable strain came up from the chaotic abyss, and, as it touched my soul, the world of art and policy dissolved, — temple and tower, statue and picture, became shadowy and dreamlike, going up like an exhalation, and hanging, like a far-off cloud, over the solid earth which stood forth fresh in the primeval vegetation." A harmonious sound ushers in a millennial paradise. Then, moving backwards in time, the world is uncreated, and Cosmos returns to Chaos: "The paradise flowers, and the venerable forests, folded up their leaves, and, by almost imperceptible degrees, receded into their

[50] *Tableaux vivans* were a popular entertainment at Brook Farm.

[51] Jeremiah 2:13.

germs. The plains bowed before the mighty majesty of ocean, which rolled its great waves over them. The ocean and the sky rushed together, and there was no more light." Heaven and earth pass away, leaving Peabody in eternal night.

Finally, the confounded mystic finds herself "with a new faith in Being." "My soul seemed to rush, with an immeasurable longing and new-kindled hope, from the Elysium of Art, even from the Paradise of Nature, into the abyss, crying for the Secret of Life." Neither the secular world of art nor nature can exist without the life power that sustains all in the universe—a power that is synonymous with Christ. The revelation, "I may not live by the dead, nor have I life within myself—" is a prayer answered thusly:

> Scarcely had I spoken, than, in the twinkling of an eye, Chaos was transformed; and I found myself in a Personal Presence, tender as Love, beautiful as Thought, terrible as Power, and a voice that was based, by the roar, as of artillery, and yet was sweeter in its articulation than the accents of childhood, said to me: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' For 'I was in the beginning with God, and was God, and without me was not anything made that is made.'

The all-encompassing power of the divine, felt in a "personal presence" that is the spirit of Christ, comes through a self-sacrificing faith. Peabody enters upon the new life through an instantaneous conversion. She humbly rejects "the world of thought, which had declared itself to me as Heaven, though it was indeed Hell; for while it was Death, it thought itself Life, and thus forever receded from Life."

The life which Peabody pursued the meaning of her entire career as a writer is a life which brings a kind of order to the universe. It is the same order, perhaps, that Emerson sought out in his own search for spirit. But life, as Peabody understood it, is a supreme being contained

in the personhood of Jesus Christ, a personality that the secularizing forces of philosophical idealism and Biblical criticism altogether doubted. One cannot rationalize the law of life, however. The affective being of life and not the rationalizing process of mind is the proper subject of “A Vision.” Peabody’s consciousness of time and eternity in a Christian context would be on the opposite end of the spectrum to that of Henry David Thoreau who, in the next chapter, explores the eternal present in the affective Transcendentalism of “contact.”

CHAPTER 3

Henry David Thoreau, Time, and Contact

"Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains" (*Walden* 98). Thoreau's image of the stream of time, found in the chapter of *Walden* titled "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," describes time as a kind of sensation. Like a fish in the water, Thoreau "drinks" in time. Time is not an abstraction but, rather, a substance, one that is both observed and consumed by Thoreau. Meanwhile, he sees how "shallow" and transient his subjective experience of time is compared to the permanence of deep time in the impenetrable "sandy bottom" of the river bed. Ultimately, Thoreau's act of reflection becomes mirrored in a physical reflection in the water below of the starry heavens above, as the geological is superimposed onto the astronomical, creating an infinite regression of time: "I would drink deeper, fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars." He adds, "I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born." Prior to any empirical knowledge of the universe, there is a sense capable of detecting the unfathomable and paradoxical bottom that is the truth of time itself, the eternal.

This passage speaks to Thoreau's sense of contact. This relational knowing, one that brings Thoreau into immanent contact with the natural and social worlds, is the method of his affective Transcendentalism. However evanescent it may be, contact is ultimately Thoreau's way of transcending secular time and finding eternity in a sacred present.

Perhaps Thoreau's most powerful passage concerning this Transcendental connection occurs during his descent of Mount Katahdin in *The Maine Woods*. After stopping short of

ascending the rocky peak because he felt constrained by time, Thoreau instead returns to his companions, and they make their way down by following a brook down the mountainside, amusing themselves by "crossing and recrossing it, leaping from rock to rock" (*MW* 67). It is after this interval of playfulness that Thoreau comes to his realization of the mystery that is "our life in nature."

> I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one,—*that* that my body might,—butI fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! —Think of our life in nature, —daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, — rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense! Contact! Contact! Who* are we? *where* are we? (*MW* 71)

Here Thoreau expresses his "awe" at the world of matter, and trembles at the immanence of contact.[1] Whether souls, or "spirits" as Thoreau calls them, ever touch their objects is not the question; that bodies come into contact and that there is a "common sense" that intercedes between the self and the world—the "who" as well as the "where"—is what fascinates Thoreau.

Similarly, in a Journal entry dated November 5, 1857, he castigates the "man of science [who] makes this mistake, and the mass of mankind along with him: that you should coolly give your chief attention to the phenomenon which excites you as something independent on you, and not as it is related to you." Thoreau continues,

> The important fact is its effect on me. He thinks that I have no business to see anything else but just what he defines the rainbow to be, but I care not whether my vision of truth

[1] Thoreau experiences immanence as well as transcendence in his early essay, "A Winter Walk." Henrik Otterberg observes Thoreau's "openness to formal positivist inquiry—and more fundamentally an interest in nature as primarily presenting an immanent order, regardless of the idealist philosophy brought to bear on it" (73).

> is a waking thought or dream remembered, whether it is seen in the light or in the dark. It is the subject of the vision, the truth alone, that concerns me. The philosopher for whom rainbows, etc., can be explained away never saw them. With regard to such objects, I find that it is not they themselves (with which the men of science deal) that concern me; the point of interest is somewhere *between* me and them (*i. e.* the objects)….[2]

Here, the beauty Thoreau sees in a rainbow is not found in the scientific explanation of it as a natural phenomenon nor is it the sign of a covenant with God, as with his Puritan forebears. The meaning of the experience is, of course, how the beauty of nature affects him. Yet beyond the Romantic naturalism of this passage, there is something else in Thoreau's experience, something that approaches a radical empiricism; that is, Thoreau not only intuits immortality but also *senses* the eternal truth. This dual recognition brings Thoreau to question what is the nature of the eternal. What is that "point of interest" between himself and the natural world and the human community? For Thoreau, it is an affective experience, an intensity not unlike spirit, this sense of contact. And unlike the affective Transcendentalisms of Emerson and Peabody, Thoreau's contact is a highly sensual experience.

Thoreau's Transcendental method is clearly one of contact. Sherman Paul describes it as "knowledge by contact, intimacy, sympathy" (*Shores of America* 7). Laura Dassow Walls, meanwhile, argues that Thoreau "developed an epistemology of *contact* rather than transcendence" through his social interaction with the material world, a relational knowledge (*Seeing New Worlds* 134). These observations follow from Thoreau himself, who in his essay "Walking" (1862) proclaims, "My desire for knowledge is intermittent, but my desire to bathe my head in atmospheres unknown to my feet is perennial and constant. The highest that we can

[2] Henry D. Thoreau, *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau* (1906), 10:164-65.

attain is not Knowledge, but Sympathy with Intelligence" (*Excursions* 215). The desire for knowledge is forever "perennial," self-renewing. Yet knowledge without the affective component of relation can never reveal the higher truth of human experience that is what Thoreau's sense of connection demands.[3] Moreover, Thoreau is stating that the limits of the human, contained in a personal "sympathy," presuppose an impersonal, limitless, and transcendent order which he identifies as "intelligence."

Contact, I argue, is the way Thoreau experiences either transcendence or immanence, ultimately that which draws him into an eternal present. A bond or connection to the eternal is the variety of religious unbelief that Thoreau embraces throughout his literary career. Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism of contact is evident in his sense experiences in *A Week*, *Walden*, and *The Maine Woods*. Contact is also made through friendship and place. It is the natural supernaturalism of a Thoreau whose religious conviction is that "God himself culminates in the present moment" (*Walden* 96-97). And as contact gives way to a "Sympathy with Intelligence," Thoreau attains a more active, moral imperative in his connection with the world.

Time and History in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

For Henry David Thoreau, the stream of time was a familiar image. That is, the Thoreau family actually kept such an image in their home. An idyllic river scene, redolent of the hours Henry and his brother, John, spent together on the Concord River, adorned the pendulum box of the family's banjo-style clock. The reverse-glass painting features two boys standing on a river

[3] Charles Taylor also comments on Thoreau's "Walking." In *A Secular Age,* Taylor interprets, in his chapter on "The Dark Abyss of Time," the meaning of Thoreau's dictum, "in Wildness is the preservation of the world" as that, "in spite of its hostility to man, or just because of this, we have to live in contact with this inhuman force, if we want to live well" (Thoreau, *Excursions* 204; Taylor 341).

bank passing time in conversation, one leaning on his fishing rod and the other sitting beside a shallow stream trickling into the foreground. Between them and the horizon is a great stone arched bridge, crossing both the river and time. It would have been a poignant reminder for Thoreau of the life he had with his beloved brother, who died tragically at age 27 in Thoreau's arms.[4]

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers is Thoreau's quest for connection—with both the memory of his brother and eternity as well.[5] The book retraces an excursion taken by the Thoreau brothers in the summer of 1839, a two-week journey to New Hampshire's White Mountains that Thoreau condenses into one, composing a chapter for each mythic day. Part elegy, part idyll, part philosophical meditation, *A Week* is a discursive journey through time and space, interposed with Thoreau's verse and a number of "digressions" on different subjects.[6] And like *Walden* and *The Maine Woods,* the narrative of *A Week* follows a cyclical time pattern, as opposed to a linear, more eschatological frame as the two brothers travel on the stream of time.

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[4] The unique timepiece was made by Samuel Whiting of Concord sometime between 1820 and 1830 for John Thoreau, Sr. It would have been acquired some time before Henry first penned the aforesaid lines from the second chapter of *Walden*, and years before John Thoreau, Jr., died unexpectedly in 1842. While no mention is made of this specific clock in *Walden*, Thoreau does speak of a clock in his Journal when he recalls a "driving snow storm" on April 12 and 13, 1852, that kept him indoors: "the imprisoning storm condenses our thoughts— I can hear the clock tick as not in pleasant weather— My life is enriched" (*PJ* 4:442). Also, according to David Wood, "Thoreau paid close attention to the things people made and to the processes involved in making them." The Concord-made clock is one of the items included in the Thoreau Collection at the Concord Museum (119).

[5] Although Robert D. Richardson believes "The element of quest is the least prominent aspect of the book," Robert Milder insists that "if *A Week* does not *recount* a quest, it does rhetorically *enact* one" (Richardson, *Henry David Thoreau* 65; Milder, *Reimagining Thoreau* 29). Jonathan Bishop, meanwhile, has compared Thoreau's perception of past and present to his apprehension of the sacred and profane ("The Experience of the Sacred in Thoreau's *Week*" 72).

[6] The form of *A Week* has proven to be a challenge for some readers. Some of the better digressions, the ones on books and on friendship, for example, are well placed, while the placement of other digressions and some of the poetry is rather awkward. Still, the organization of the book may be best characterized as a memoir, the genre that Thoreau originally had in mind for publication of early chapters in *The Dial*. After the death of John, however, the "Memoirs" that Thoreau planned to write became one memoir and one memorial.

The excursion begins with a sketch of the "Concord River," an idyllic encounter with the river in different modes of time. One source of encounter with the river is in its natural history. Originating in the western agrarian towns, this part of the river is "worth the while . . . only to see how much country there is in the rear of us," Thoreau says (*Week* 7). Another source is the human history of river. On the river today, Thoreau promises that "you shall see men you never heard of before, whose names you don't know," that "you shall see rude and sturdy, experienced and wise men" as well as mute, inglorious Miltons of the field who embody a natural virtue, living and working along the river (*Week* 7, 8). Thoreau recalls the settlers who established Concord and renamed the river, along with a tacit acknowledgment of displaced native Americans who had named the river "Musketaquid," meaning "grass ground river."

The life of the Concord River that Thoreau describes here and throughout *A Week* is a transcendental emblem of time and eternity, "as yesterday and the historical ages are past, as the work of to-day is present, so some flitting perspectives, and demi-experiences of the life that is in nature are, in time, veritably future, or rather outside to time, perennial, young, divine, in the wind and rain which never die" (*Week* 8). An ever-receding past in its wake, the present moment moves forward into a future that exists "outside to time." One connects with eternity through those fleeting moments that are "perennial, young, divine." Travel on the river affords these moments of lucidity and reflection. Thoreau also elevates the Concord to a mythic status among the world's rivers. Both are techniques that will be on display in *Walden*. "I trust," Thoreau says, "that I may be allowed to associate our muddy but much abused Concord river with the most famous in history," namely the "Mississippi, the Ganges, and the Nile" (*Week* 12). Mythologizing Concord River becomes a way of immortalizing its narrator and his companion on the voyage.

"At length, on Saturday, the last day of August, 1839, we two, brothers, and natives of Concord, weighed anchor in this river port," Thoreau recounts, "for Concord, too, lies under the sun, a port of entry and departure for the bodies as well as the souls of men" (*Week* 15). Linck Johnson notes how this sentence omits a reference to "heaven" that appeared in both the Journal and the first draft of *A Week*, "in order to emphasize the bond between the spiritual and the physical" (*PJ* 1:314).[7] This line follows a verse epigraph from Francis Quarles's "Christ's Invitation to the Soul": "Come, come, my lovely fair, and let us try/These rural delicates" (*Week* 15). Thoreau takes this quotation out of its religious context and gives it a secular perspective, making a heaven of earth. Thoreau does this throughout *A Week*; that is, according to Carl Hovde, he "avoids the predominantly Christian tone of many of the poets whose lines he borrows for use in *A Week*" (74). Rather than a departure of souls from bodies, Thoreau's *Week* centers on a departure of souls from their home on a mythic journey into the past and the heavens on earth that they find there.

A Week casts off by reflecting on the different histories of the river, comprising the various associations that the world has with the brothers' native Concord.[8] One of those histories is Concord River's place in American history and culture. With a blast from their guns, the brothers give a farewell "salute" to their friends that sounds across the "broad meadows" where in April, 1775, "the shot heard round the world" echoed at the Battle of North Bridge (*Week* 17). The sight of the bridge's remains recalls the first two stanzas of Emerson's "Concord Hymn," the second of which reads,

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[7] Johnson further notes that Thoreau "expunged" the Christian allusions from his own poetry and prose in *A Week* (289, 96).

[8] James R. Guthrie describes the "multilayered chronologies" of *A Week* as a "temporal palimpsest, upon which the story of the trip has been inscribed, and reinscribed, both by time and by Thoreau" (53).

The foe long since in silence slept;

Alike the conqueror silent sleeps

And Time the ruined bridge has swept

Down the dark stream which seaward creeps. (*Week* 17)

Time has washed away the bridge where redcoats and minutemen fought, and it has silenced the living voices that were a bridge to the past. To these lines of Emerson's, Thoreau affixes his own verse. Comparing the Revolutionary sites of Massachusetts to "Romes of modern birth," Thoreau declares,

In vain I search a foreign land

To find our Bunker Hill

And Lexington and Concord stand

By no Laconian rill. (*Week* 17)

By which he means, not a taciturn stream in ancient Greece, but rather the glory that the War of Independence gave to his native Commonwealth with the "shot heard 'round the world." The passage then leaves this historical scene and moves forward to the present, one that carries with it a sense of loss.

But since we sailed

Some things have failed,

And many a dream

Gone down the stream. (*Week* 17)

Dreams of the life that could have been John's, most assuredly, have been swept away by mortality, a common trope tinged by Thoreau's deeply personal loss, but Thoreau's aspirations for literary greatness may also be what the author refers to here. As they drift by the Old Manse,

now a shrine to both Concord's religious and literary culture, Thoreau remembers two of its former inhabitants, Reverend Ezra Ripley and author Nathaniel Hawthorne, the latter of whom told of his own experience on the Concord River—in the same rowboat "Musketaquid," which Hawthorne rechristened the "Pond Lily" when he bought it from Thoreau. As the brothers pass under the new North Bridge, Thoreau venerates his friend, Ellery Channing, as the poet of the Concord meadow Ponkawtasset. Thoreau feels that his own literary greatness has passed him by, or at least that it lays somewhere downstream.

Here the narrative shifts again, from political and cultural history to natural history as Thoreau describes the flora and fauna of the river as well as some of its human inhabitants. Both human and natural histories become different ways of encountering the river, and through the encounter the river takes on greater meaning. As history recedes, a more sensual immersion takes place on that first day on the river. "Gradually the village murmur subsided," Thoreau says, "and we seemed to be embarked on the placid current of our dreams, floating from past to future as silently as one awakes to fresh morning or evening thoughts" (*Week* 19-20). Again and again, Thoreau invokes a profound, almost sacred silence that envelops the brothers as they "glided noiselessly" down the river. When they camp that first night, the silence is intermittently broken, and they hear "a more conscious silence" (*Week* 40). The sounds of the world at night, the "breathing of the wind," the "song of a dreaming sparrow," a far-off fire alarm, pique the same curiosity in them as the russet-clad children who had heard the blasting of their rifles through the woodlands. "All these sounds, the crowing of cocks, the baying of dogs, and the hum of insects at noon, are the evidence of nature's health or *sound* state," observes Thoreau (*Week* 41-42). What is missing in the book, though, is the voice of John. His presence is expressed only in the

"we" invoked by Thoreau. John's story is shared both with his brother, Henry, and with the reader in a universal, mythic narrative of discovery and recovery.

The "Everlasting Something"

On "Sunday," the Thoreau brothers wake to the dawn of a new world and new possibilities of religion, of connection with the divine. A "dense fog" covers the river and its banks in the quiet morning hours, "with more of the auroral rosy and white than of the yellow light in it, as if," Thoreau imagines, "it dated from earlier than the fall of man, and still preserved a heathenish integrity" (*Week* 43). The prelapsarian paradise that Thoreau sees is not only outside of Biblical chronology. It also possesses a "heathenish integrity" that Thoreau identifies with, as he likens himself to a "Heathen without reproach," admiring the sun's light on the sun's day instead of observing Christian worship. The morning's impressions are fleeting, however, and "not even the most 'persevering mortal' can preserve the memory of its freshness to mid-day" (*Week* 43-44). Thoreau, borrowing the phrase "persevering mortal" from Zoroaster, one which Emerson had used to describe the self-reliant individual, makes a statement about time affecting memory, as well as a kind of futility of mortality. His heathen religiosity embraces the cycles of time and nature's mutability, to which he will contrast the inflexible, memorializing rigidity of Sunday having been made a day of compulsory worship.

One of the revelations of "Sunday" is the relationship between the temporal and the eternal in the present moment; that is, the temporal is not merely the symbol of the eternal but the eternal is a reflection of the temporal, and the present is where both come into contact. This mirroring is observed in the trees Thoreau sees along the river. "For every oak and birch too growing on the hill-top," Thoreau imagines that, "we knew that there was a graceful ethereal and ideal tree making down from the roots" (*Week* 45). Thoreau takes notes of "stillness," which was

“intense and almost conscious, as if it were a natural Sabbath, and we fancied that the morning was the evening of a celestial day.” Thoreau’s perception of silence takes on a cosmic religiosity. He senses that “the air was so elastic and crystalline that it had the same effect on the landscape that a glass has on a picture, to give it an ideal remoteness and perfection.” Once again, Thoreau projects a kind of intelligence into the natural world, just as the natural world reflects back a vision of the ideal. The moment is experienced in time and perceived outside of it, just as the light of the sun is reflected from the world below.

The temporal and eternal are reflections of one another in Thoreau’s cosmology. What makes one able to see into the spiritual depths of nature is an “intention of the eye”:

> It required some rudeness to disturb with our boat the mirror-like surface of the water, in which every twig and blade of grass was faithfully reflected; too faithfully indeed for art to imitate, for only nature may exaggerate herself. The shallowest still water is unfathomable. Wherever the trees and skies are reflected there is more than Atlantic depth, and no danger of fancy running aground. We noticed that it required a separate intention of the eye, a more free and abstracted vision, to see the reflected trees and the sky, than to see the river bottom merely; and so are there manifold visions in the direction of every object, and even the most opaque reflect the heavens from their surface. Some men have their eyes naturally intended to the one, and some to the other object. (*Week* 48)

Thoreau’s imagination is of a cosmological heaven glimpsed in the timeless reflection on the “unfathomable” water. This “seeing,” an act of interpretation or reading through one’s senses, amounts to Thoreau’s religious vision. If eternity is a reflection of the past in the nature of the

present, then one has the ability—a "more free and abstracted vision," perhaps, to perceive "faithfully" the eternal in nature, thereby achieving connection in an eternal present.

Sunday is, of course, a day for worship in early nineteenth-century New England, not for boating. Thoreau makes clear that recreation on a Sunday puts him in direct opposition to a community that holds to tradition in religion. As the brothers approach the juncture of the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Thoreau notes that "the people coming out of church paused to look" at them in disapproval, drawing forth "heathenish comparisons; but we were the truest observers of this sunny day" (*Week* 63). In New England's Puritan past, offenders would be locked in a cage outside the meetinghouse for such a violation on the Sabbath.

Yet, as Thoreau observes, "society has relaxed a little from its strictness," adding, "I presume that there is not less *religion* than formerly. If the *ligature* is found to be loosened in one part, it is only drawn the tighter in another" (*Week* 64). Thoreau's word play reveals the root of "religion" in the same word for "ligature" — that is, the root of "religio," from "ligare," means a "bond" between God and man, and thus "re-ligare," or "religio" is to reconnect with the divine source. Religion, in Thoreau's view, is what binds a community together and what connects them with God. Elsewhere he describes the "ligature" as an "umbilical cord" with man on one end, his god on the other (*Week* 78). Connection is thus the essence of religion.

Thoreau's strident criticism of institutional religion, including Christianity and the New Testament itself, may be expressed in his sentiment that "a man's real faith is never contained in his creed, nor is his creed an article of his faith" (*Week* 78). His Transcendentalist understanding of Christianity is, as he calls it, a "radical" one (*Week* 136). In his Christianity the consciousness that is Christ speaks to the divine within the individual, while organized religion presumes the

authority to speak for Christ, a religious individualism that Thoreau interprets in Jesus's teachings.

Advocating for a true religion of Christ, Thoreau makes the relationship between prophet and individual a personal one. "I trust that some may be as near and dear to Buddha, or Christ, or Swedenborg, who are without the pale of their churches," he says, referring to individuals such as himself who signed off from church membership: "It is necessary not to be Christian, to appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ. I know that some will have hard thoughts of me, when they hear their Christ named beside my Buddha, yet I am sure that I am willing they should love their Christ more than my Buddha, for the love is the main thing, and I like him too" (*Week* 67). The affinity Thoreau expresses is one of love and of "like," bringing Christ and Buddha down to the level of personal friends.

"Monday" contains a number of digressions into history and legend, the most significant digression being the one on Eastern scripture. In the closing of "Monday" Thoreau becomes once again enraptured by the sensuousness of sound. The brothers camp for the night in the woods outside the village of Nashua, New Hampshire. Here Thoreau makes an early discovery of the value of "wilderness": "The wilderness is near, as well as dear, to every man" (*Week* 171). In the wilderness the smallest sounds become amplified as the two brothers lay down to sleep along the bank of the Merrimack. Crickets and spiders and "a thousand little artisans beat on their anvils all night long" in the grass under their ears (*Week* 172). Off in the distance they hear the martial sound of a drummer. Thoreau describes how they listened with "unprejudiced sense as if for the first time we heard at all" (*Week* 173). That the sense is "unprejudiced," uninfluenced by the judgment of the intellect, allows for the drummer's music to deepen Thoreau's perception of time and space. As Thoreau recalls, "his music afforded us a prime and leisure hour, and we felt

that we were in season wholly. These simple sounds related us to the stars. Aye, there was a logic in them so convincing that the combined sense of mankind could never make me doubt their conclusions." Thoreau subjectively perceives the "logic" of music, his aural sense usurping the powers of the intellect with an authority greater than any other.

"Suddenly," Thoreau remarks, "old Time winked at me,—Ah you know me, you rogue,—and news had come that IT was well." The sound-ness of sound assures Thoreau of the health of the world around him—not merely the physical world itself but that "IT" that is the supreme being of all life. This good news is communicated by "old Time" in a wink, a wordless, visual expression of recognition. In this case, the personified figure of time recognizes the subject in Thoreau. Through his senses, Thoreau perceives his friend, old Time, and eternity,

> Then idle Time ran gadding by
>
> And left me with Eternity alone;
>
> I hear beyond the range of sound,
>
> I see beyond the verge of sight,—

Thoreau's experience of the eternal requires supernatural senses that go "beyond" the ordinary, but senses nonetheless, for without the sense the "I" which hears and sees Thoreau as subject will cease to be.

> I see, smell, taste, hear, that everlasting Something to which we are allied, at once our maker, our abode, our destiny, our very Selves; the one historic truth, the most remarkable fact which can become the distinct and uninvited subject of our thought, the actual glory of the universe; the only fact which a human being cannot avoid recognizing, or in some way forget or dispense with.—
>
> It doth expand my privacies

To all, and leave me single in the crowd. (*Week* 173-74)

It is not a singular self that is the remarkable fact of our being but the interconnectedness of all life, "our very Selves" is that "everlasting Something." And one's interconnectedness, the contact one makes with others, that we share through the experience of life, is the most profound fact, the object of his spiritual quest in *A Week* and of Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism.

The Sympathy of Friendship

While "Tuesday" delineates Thoreau's earlier ascent of Saddleback Mountain, it is the extended digression on friendship in the "Wednesday" chapter wherein *A Week* finds its center—in an interpersonal contact called sympathy. "While we float here, far from that tributary stream on whose banks our friends and kindred dwell," Thoreau ponders the laws of kindness "whose pulse still beats at any distance and forever":

True kindness is a pure divine affinity

Not founded upon human consanguinity

It is a spirit, not a blood relation,

Superior to family and station. (*Week* 259)

The "divine affinity" that prompts benevolent affections is one that Emerson had described in his Divinity School Address as being like the law of gravity. Philosopher David Hume may disagree, but sympathy, as Thoreau contends, is not in the "blood" of man's nature but it is a "spirit."

The ideal "Friend" is capable of a superior kindness. The problem with actual friends is one of sympathy. Thoreau expresses his ambivalent feelings about sympathy and friendship in "Sympathy," another poem included in the friendship section that alludes to the "practical allegory" of his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "The Gentle Boy." While "Sympathy" was inspired by the actual Edmund Sewall, the brother of Ellen Sewall, a close friend of the Thoreau

brothers—the poem speaks to an idea of an innocent, mystical consciousness coming of age in a harsh, unsympathetic world.[9] The "sympathy more rare," as Thoreau designates it, preserves the ideal and overcomes the dangers of actual friendship. The conflict between Christian humanism and Puritan rationalism dramatized in Hawthorne's tale about an adopted Quaker child who dies at the cruel hand of Puritan children was inspired by an actual event in the history of the Quakers in New England. This conflict between the heart and the head—epitomized by the old Puritan dilemma of weaned affections—requires "not an idle sympathy and mutual consolation merely," Thoreau contends, "but a heroic sympathy of aspiration and endeavor" (*Week* 274).

Thoreau, it appears, feels conflicted about his relationship with the past. Hawthorne would think it a privilege to feel optimistic in a place like Concord when you are the one strolling down its "Main Street." The problem of history for Hawthorne was a sentimentality that tended to allegorize the past, disassociating itself from evil. Thoreau, on the other hand, is trying to parse out a sympathy with virtue from the rosy reminiscence. The problem of history—"Lately, alas, I knew a gentle boy"—as Thoreau says, is one of distance, an impersonal factor of time and space, that estranges the individual from some pure self (*Week* 260). And it is in sympathy that one discovers the divine.

Thoreau's digression on the idea and practice of friendship in the "Wednesday" chapter has been called "the most Transcendental of all" the passages in what is considered Thoreau's most Transcendental book (Harding 55). It is also a good example of a Transcendentalism James Elliot Cabot described as a "remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground" (1:128).[10]

[9] See Mary E. Pitts, "Thoreau's Poem 'Sympathy': His 'Gentle Boy' Identified," *Concord Saunterer*, 18:2 (December 1985), 20-27. Also in Perry Miller, *Consciousness in Concord: The Text of Thoreau's Hitherto "Lost Journal" (1840-1841)* (1958), 10.

[10] F. O. Matthiessen famously misquotes Cabot when he calls transcendentalism "'romanticism in a Puritan setting.'" See Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941), 104.

While the subject of friendship is foregrounded in the Romantic tradition's enthusiasm for and debate over the importance of the "Friend," it is equally rooted as well in the New England literary tradition's investment in the power of sympathy. The vestiges of this Puritan sympathy can be found in the moral philosophy and corporate body of Unitarianism. Self-culture dictates that "Nothing but sympathy with society will lead to its cure," and that friendship is "the quickening principle" (Channing, *Note-book* 14, 41). William Ellery Channing deems that "a true friend embraces our objects as his own. We feel another mind bent on the same end, enjoying it, ensuring it, reflecting it, and delighting in our devotion to it." Yet, "True friendship founded on moral qualities," he qualifies, "is utterly inconsistent with a partial, exclusive, unsocial attachment to a few. I do not love my friend unless I am sensible to his excellences when manifested in others and unless I am attached to the cause of universal virtue" (*Note-book* 43). The moral attachment that Thoreau experiences through friendship is no different. His idea of friendship is, like the inseparability between God and man of Emerson's moral sense, an affective relation between himself and his friend.

Much has been said of the influence that Emerson had on Thoreau's idea of friendship, as well as how the death of Thoreau's brother shapes this passage.[11] It is pointing out that in much the same way that Emerson's "Orphic Poet" of *Nature* is inspired by both his recently deceased brother, Charles, and his mystic friend, Bronson Alcott, Thoreau's "Friend" can be thought of as inspired by John Thoreau as well as by Emerson, whose friendship with the latter had, for a brief time, become strained. He declares,

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[11] See, for example, John T. Lysaker and William Rossi, eds, *Emerson and Thoreau: Figures of Friendship* (2010).

> The true and not despairing Friend will address his Friend in some such terms as these. "I never asked thy leave to let me love thee,—I have a right. I love thee not as something private and personal, which is your own, but as something universal and worthy of love, which I have found. O, how I think of you! You are purely good, —you are infinitely good. I can trust you forever. I did not think that humanity was so rich. Give me an opportunity to live." (*Week* 269)

Here Thoreau expresses his feelings about friendship in the same form that they take in Emerson's essay on "Friendship"—a letter addressed to a friend. The "Friend" that Thoreau addresses is at once an ideal and an actual friend, yet it is what is "universal and worthy of love" that is loved and not "something private and personal." Neither God nor the Friend can be loved for their personhood—for if God is within man, He is within the Friend and must be loved in the same manner, according to Thoreau's Transcendentalist logic.

Thoreau's treatment of sympathy in friendship is more ambivalent, more skeptical, and in every way representative of how Transcendentalism sought to reform and reconstitute society. "Friendship," Thoreau maintains, "is not so kind as is imagined" (*Week* 275) It is ideal since "it has not much human blood in it, but consists with a certain disregard for men and their erections, the Christian duties and humanities, while it purifies the air like electricity" (*Week* 275-76). There is an impulse, like a static charge, that underlies the experience of contact through friendship that is natural yet godlike.

> We may call it an essentially heathenish intercourse, free and irresponsible in its nature, and practicing all the virtues gratuitously. It is not the highest sympathy merely, but a pure and lofty society, a fragmentary and godlike intercourse of ancient date, still kept up at intervals, which, remembering itself, does not hesitate to disregard the humbler rights

> and duties of humanity. It requires immaculate and godlike qualities full-grown, and exists at all only by condescension and anticipation of the remotest future. (*Week* 275-276)

To be sure, Thoreau's reflection on friendship is not a romantic ode to a noble idea. Friendship is a "tragedy" caused by a "divine affinity" (*Week* 274), like a violent bolt of lightning, but one that serves one better, Thoreau suggests, than the divine comedy that is a striving for "likeness to God."[12] Thoreau's friendship thus represents a more critical optimism developed in response to the crueler optimism of Romantic friendship: "The only danger in Friendship," he says, "is that it will end" (*Week* 277).

Friends treat us not as what we are, Thoreau professes, but as what we aspire to be. This is what he means by their being not an "idle sympathy" but a "heroic sympathy" (*Week* 274). While Ralph Waldo Emerson believed that "in self-trust all the virtues are comprehended," it was in the virtue of a "Friend" that Thoreau was most Transcendentally optimistic (*CW* I: 63). At the same time, friends will also find their own faults projected in each other. In this "heathenish" friendship, Thoreau maintains, "all the abuses which are the object of reform with the philanthropist, the statesman, and the housekeeper, are unconsciously amended in the intercourse of Friends," but one "cannot hew the smallest chip out of the character of [his] Friend, either to beautify it or deform it" (*Week* 267, 284).

> As surely as the sunset in my latest November shall translate me to the ethereal world, and remind me of the ruddy morning of youth; as surely as the last strain of music which falls on my decaying ear shall make age to be forgotten, or, in short, the manifold influences of nature survive during the term of our natural life,

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[12] Channing, "Likeness to God," quoted in *Transcendentalism: A Reader*, ed. Joel Myerson (2000), 3-20.

> so surely my Friend shall forever be my Friend, and reflect a ray of God to me, and time shall foster and adorn and consecrate our Friendship, no less than the ruins of temples. As I love nature, as I love singing birds, and gleaming stubble, and flowing rivers, and morning and evening, and summer and winter, I love thee my Friend. (*Week* 285)

The assurance that friendship will prevail into eternity is equal to Thoreau's conviction that the temporal, cyclical duration of one's "natural life" will return the soul back to its source in eternity. And while to Thoreau that "Friend" shall "reflect a ray of God," friendship unfolds and becomes itself in "time." In the last line of this passage on friendship, the ephemeral beauty of nature's forms, physical and temporal, gives Thoreau ways to declare his infinite love for his friend. Contact through friendship is ultimately a religious impulse, religion in that true sense of the word as a bonding to the divine. As such, Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism of contact will expand from friendship to an interconnectedness through the natural world.

After the understated trek to the summit of Agiocochook at the end of the "Thursday" chapter, the Thoreau brothers begin their return voyage: "We had gone to bed in summer, and we awoke in autumn; for summer passes into autumn in some unimaginable point in time, like the turning of a leaf" (*Week* 334). The autumnal mood lends itself to more introspection, so much so that Thoreau's voice in "Friday" is much more like that of *Walden* in its assertiveness and attention to nature. "Men nowhere, east or west, live yet a *natural* life," that is, a more sensuous life that would supersede ideas of the religious in the Eastern or Western hemispheres, because "man would desecrate it by his touch, and so the beauty of the world remains veiled to him" (*Week* 379). "He needs not only to be spiritualized, but *naturalized*," Thoreau reasons. Over a decade, however, of Transcendentalist spiritualizing had yet to transform the consciousness of a

materialistic nineteenth-century society. In light of this failure, Thoreau asks, "What is this heaven which they expect, if it is no better than they expect? Are they prepared for a better than they can now imagine? Here or nowhere is our heaven."[13] Thoreau proposes that individuals learn to heighten their senses to the world around them. "To be 'naturalized,'" David M. Robinson argues, entails a purification and revivification of our 'touch,' our fundamental contact with the world" (*Natural Life* 75). Through this contact, humanity would "need pray for no higher heaven than the pure senses can furnish, a *purely* sensuous life" (*Week* 382).[14] This is the interconnected and affirming life on which Thoreau would embark in *Walden*.

Walden's Sense of Place

If contact in *A Week* is located in friendship, in *Walden* it is found in place. The connection to place is at once economical, ecological, and philosophical, with the directive to "live deliberately." Thoreau's call to live deliberately demands that one examine oneself, in one's place, to find eternity in each moment. And in order to live deliberately, Thoreau cultivated a sense of human connection with place at Walden Pond. Lawrence Buell has defined this sense of place, or place-sense, as "affect-laden yet not entirely idiosyncratic," a subjectivity that is "intersocial," or, as I propose, affecting and affected by the connection one feels that defines place as a "felt space" (*Environmental Imagination* 253). Buell notes how the pond itself is represented "by building on a counterpoint between a surveyor's deference to verifiable truth and a denizen's sense of place as subjectively felt." In a similar fashion, Thoreau lays out his plan in

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[13] The quotation is from the 1849 edition of *A Week*. The Princeton edition follows the 1868 edition which included an additional line between the second and third quoted above: "Where is the heaven of him who dies on a stage in a theatre?" See Henry D. Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849); *Week* 379-80, as well as 525 of the textual introduction.

[14] For certainly, Thoreau asserts that, "we are provided with senses as well fitted to penetrate the spaces of the real, the substantial, the eternal, as these outward are to penetrate the material universe" (*Week* 386).

the more practical chapter one, “Economy,” where he models himself after Plato’s “true philosopher” before assuming the role of poet-priest as he creates the sacred, mythical ground into which he drives his ethical stakes in “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For.”

“I have thought that Walden Pond would be a good place for business,” says Thoreau. Thoreau’s economic “enterprise” would, in part, consist of his bean field, which gave him the financial support to write the first draft of *A Week*. That said, the interconnected relationship Thoreau conceives between himself and the natural world is rooted in a concept from eighteenth-century natural philosophy, the “economy of nature.” This theory of the natural world conceives of nature as a kind of “dwelling place” or *oikos*, wherein all life assumes a hierarchical structure. The classical *oeconomia*, or Aristotelian great chain of being, was later married to medieval ideas about “the soul of the world” and “the spirit of nature,” the life-giving energy that circulated in all living things.[15] And it was this idea of natural economy that informed the method of natural theology, the branch of theology that interpreted signs in the natural world as examples of God’s grace.[16]

In assessing Thoreau’s writings, there is an important distinction to be made between natural economy and what might be understood as present-day ecology. Unlike ecology, which concerns itself primarily with relationships between organisms and their environments, natural economy is a theory of biology that presupposes a life force or vital spirit in all living organisms,

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[15] For a useful history of ecology and its origins in natural economy, see Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (1989).

[16] George Gregory was one such natural theologian who saw “the effect of intelligence and design” present in creation. In his 1804 treatise on *The Economy of Nature*, Gregory states, “however ignorant and superficial observers may wander from the path of truth, the naturalist at least can never be an atheist” (77). Another important student of the theory of natural economy was William Paley. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Paley brought together a variety of observations and, in 1802, he made an argument for the existence of God in his famous “watchmaker” analogy. More important for the Transcendentalists, however, was the influence of Emmanuel Swedenborg, who borrowed ideas from natural theology for his concept of correspondence.

what others, including many indigenous peoples, define as animism. This concept can be traced back to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century naturalists who incorporated older, medieval ideas about supernatural spirits into their scientific observations. For example, the seventeenth-century biologist Carolus Linnaeus (Emmanuel Swedenborg's cousin) believed that all natural systems and objects consisted of a cyclical flow of energy, or life force, which he compared to the cycle of water in the environment. He also attributed the force that moves natural cycles to a supernatural power, what would eventually be regarded as "spirit" among the Transcendentalists—a concept of life as old as antiquity.[17] When Thoreau says, "the life in us is like the water in a river" (356), he is expressing a similar sentiment about life as a vital principle.

The natural economy of *Walden* encompasses time by making life a type of commodity: "the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run" (*Walden* 31). In an earlier passage, Thoreau similarly ponders the cost of wasting one's time, "as if you could kill time without injuring eternity" (*Walden* 8). *Walden* is about living in the present and finding the ecstatic divine in each moment: "All change is a miracle to contemplate; but it is a miracle which is taking place every instant" (*Walden* 11). Or, as Thoreau says of himself, "In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line" (*Walden* 17). *Walden* will return to this image of time in the Artist of Kouroo story in its conclusion. For now, Thoreau emphasizes self-improvement, the Transcendentalist's *modus*

[17] Linnaeus incorporates his religious belief into his ecology. For example, Linnaeus claims that "to perpetuate the established course of nature in a continued series, the divine wisdom has thought fit, that all living creatures should constantly be employed in producing individuals, that all natural things should contribute and lend a helping hand toward preserving every species, and lastly that the death and destruction of one thing should always be subservient to the restitution of another" (quoted in Egerton 336).

operandi. *Walden* is, as Leonard N. Neufeldt puts it, an "enterprise of self-culture in a culture of enterprise."

Thoreau's economy, his dwelling place, is a lived philosophy; and his lived philosophy is a moral one. Part of his philosophy is a kind of eclecticism which describes his spiritual faith. As he confesses in his journal, "I have no sympathy with the bigotry & ignorance which make transient & partial & peurile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith & anothers—as christian & heathen– I pray to be delivered from narrowness partiality exaggeration—bigotry. To the philosopher all sects all nations are alike. I like Brahma-Hare Buddha-the Great spirit as well as God" (*PJ* 3:62). Thoreau, it will be shown, thinks of himself as a true philosopher. And his philosophy is at times an asceticism rooted in the classical philosophical tradition. Some critics later contended that his asceticism made Thoreau look like a Yankee Diogenes, for he was true to that Cynical school in living harmoniously with nature, and searching for the honest man within himself. Yet the philosopher who casts the largest shadow on *Walden* is Plato, in whose *Republic* Thoreau finds a blueprint for an ideal, individual community in its own ideal city-state, prompting Thoreau to declare that his utopia will be founded by a philosopher who lives according to his American virtues into an American futurity.

Plato at Walden

In "Economy" Thoreau makes the distinction between those who are thought to be philosophers and those who actually are: "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and

trust" (*Walden* 14-15). Compare this to a passage in the *Republic* that contains part of Socrates's valorization of philosophers when addressing common folk:

> "do not thus altogether accuse the multitude; but, whatever opinion they may have, without upbraiding them, but rather encouraging them, and revoking the reproach thrown on philosophy, point out to them the persons you call philosophers, and define distinctly, as at present, both their genius and their pursuits, that they may not think you speak of such as they call philosophers; or, if they mean the same men, you will tell them they have conceived a different opinion of the men from what you have, and give very different answers about them from yours." (I:336)

Virtuous as they may be, the philosophers Socrates praises were hated among some Athenians. Socrates recommends that his brother Adeimantus try a more persuasive approach to sell the people on the value of the philosophers. One should defend both "their genius and their pursuits," their inspired thought and what they do with it, and do this "without upbraiding" one's critics for not knowing better.

In the same way that Thoreau justifies himself and his philosophy to his critics, Plato's *Republic* uses an ironic style that alternates between unpretentiousness and sanctimony. For there is a difference between the diplomatic way that Socrates proposes that philosophers defend themselves and the ironic chastising that Plato accomplishes.[18] Thoreau understands this quite well, having found his philosopher and his philosophy in the opposition of Platonic irony. Emerson's idea of the intellectually inseparable "double star" of Socrates and Plato was not the

[18] This is related to the larger distinction between what is properly Socratic and what is Platonic, more commonly referred to as the Socratic Problem. Friedrich Schleiermacher is largely responsible for the body of scholarship on this philosophical dilemma. For a concise overview, see Louis-André Dorion, "The Rise and Fall of the Socratic Problem," 1-23.

way that Thoreau understood the relationship between teacher and student (*CW* IV: 39). Instead, he identifies with a Plato who presents himself as a more subversive and challenging pupil to Socrates. The same could well be said for the relationship between Thoreau and Emerson.

Plato's Socrates is thus a source for *Walden*'s style of provocation in which by accounting for oneself and one's actions Thoreau challenges the audience to take account of their own lives. This is an element of the Classical *apologia*, seen elsewhere in the writings of the Transcendentalists who in the 1830s and 1840s found themselves on the defensive.[19] Plato's *Republic* is defensive about the position of the philosopher in the just city. Thoreau, too, defends his moral authority to his fellow townspeople—some of whom had not forgiven him for the fire he started in 1844 after igniting a campfire in an old tree stump, one that destroyed a significant amount of the town's woodlots. To be sure, Thoreau's posture is not entirely defensive. The first draft of *Walden* was very much a dialogue with his fellow Concordians who were curious about his life at the pond. Nevertheless, scholars like James D. Reid, Rick Anthony Furtak, and Jonathan Ellsworth agree that "if we want an ancient model of Thoreau's project, we should probably look back to Plato's *Republic*" (8) for the way it addresses the ordinary, practical aspects of life, including the way it questions the philosopher's mode of existence.[20]

[19] "For Socrates and Thoreau, *apologia* is at the heart of philosophy" (147), according to Jonathan Ellsworth, citing the *Apology* as another important dialogue in Thoreau's reading. Other notable examples of *apologia* may include Emerson's Divinity School Address and Theodore Parker's "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity." See James D. Reid, Rick Anthony Furtak, and Jonathan Ellsworth, *Thoreau's Importance for Philosophy* (2012).

[20] Thoreau was a student of the Classics long before going to Walden. In his Harvard days he read widely in the ancient Greeks and Romans, often borrowing unassigned texts from the college library. Sometime during the *Dial* years he assigned himself a rigorous course of reading in Classic literature that contained the major works from approximately fifty ancient poets, philosophers, and historians. In her survey of Thoreau's classical influences, Ethel Seybold writes, "Thoreau's journal in the early days of the experiment indicates that Greece and the classics were steadily in his thoughts. He thinks that his house has the auroral atmosphere of the halls of Olympus, such an atmosphere as that in which the works of Grecian art were made; natural objects remind him of patterns in Greek art; Walden is his Ithaca; he is a fellow wanderer and survivor of Ulysses; he is visited by a woodchopper, a true Homeric boor, a Paphlagonian man; then come five Lestrigones; there are many passages of appreciation of the classics later transferred to *Walden*" (51). See "A List of Authors Read or to be Read by H. D. Thoreau" in F. B. Sanborn, *The Life of Henry David Thoreau*, (1917), 520-21.

Thoreau could sympathize with the plight of ancient philosophers as he lives a philosopher's life at Walden. But when he went to the pond in 1845, many in his community and family were skeptical about what he meant to accomplish. It took him some time to figure it out, too, and Plato's *Republic* may have given him some guidance. The Greek title, *Πολιτεία*, conveys several meanings, according to the copy of John Pickering's *Greek and English Lexicon* (1829) that Thoreau owned: one of these is "mode of life" (695). From 1847 through 1852, Thoreau spoke at lyceums explaining himself and his mode of living to audiences in Concord and other towns, with some in the audience scratching their heads and others admiring his decision. By 1852 he would tell them that he had long since moved on from an earlier "experiment" in which he describes himself as "A Poet Buying a Farm." The young man who valued only the pastoral ideal that the Hallowell place cabin on the farm represented but could not see himself tied down to was grateful for his poverty and his freedom to pursue the just life in pursuit of truth. The beauty of this utopian alternative allows him to make a heaven on earth where fellow Transcendentalists at Brook Farm and Fruitlands had failed.

He appreciates Plato for his *via negativa*, a mode of expression much like his own paradoxical style of stating things in opposites that so irked Emerson. He also appreciates what Plato affirms about truth and beauty. His Journal for contains an entry on the "one principle at the bottom of all affinities" (*PJ* 2:6), a law of attraction that is evident in all nature, and he remarks that "Plato's republic is the scene of Platonic love." One may even detect a strain, albeit

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As for Plato in particular, Thoreau's first biographer, Ellery Channing, claims, "I never knew him say a good word for Plato" (58). "Plato and Montaigne and Goethe," writers Emerson revered, "were all too slow for him: the hobbies he rode dealt with realities, not shadows, and he philosophized *ab initio*," no instruction required (58). "Metaphysics," Channing claims, "was his aversion" (50). He may have had little use for systematic philosophy, and when it came to the ancient Greeks he was more interested in their poetry. Ellery Channing may not have been the most valid authority on Thoreau's reading and intellectual interest, for what he saw as a so-called aversion to metaphysics did not stop Thoreau from reading Plato.

a small strain, of Platonism in Thoreau's writing, in a Journal entry for November 2, 1843, written while he was living on Staten Island:

> I believe that there is an ideal or real nature, infinitely more perfect than the actual as there is an ideal life of man. Else where are the glorious summers which in vision sometimes visit my brain[.]
>
> When nature ceases to be supernatural to a man—what will he do then? Of what worth is human life—if its actions are no longer to have this sublime and unexplored scenery. Who will build a cottage and dwell in it with enthusiasm if not in the elysian fields? (*PJ* 1: 481)

This Journal entry was written several months after the death of close friend Charles Stearns Wheeler, with whom Thoreau had shared such a "cottage." Soon after this experience, Thoreau built his own cottage, to dwell in the Elysium that was his memory of his river excursion with his brother, John. That experience became *A Week*. The other experience—of being in the actual world of the present—became *Walden*.[21]

Considering how much he emulated his admired friend, Wheeler, it is not surprising to find Thoreau taking Plato with him to Walden. According to Margaret Fuller, years before Thoreau built his house at Walden Pond, he desired a "lonely hut" for himself as a place to read

[21] How Thoreau ends up taking Plato to Walden in the first place owes a great deal to his friendship with Charles Stearns Wheeler, who had been Thoreau's Concord Academy classmate and Harvard roommate, in addition to being Emerson's other protégé, his "good Grecian" (Emerson-Carlyle 323). Wheeler took over as Harvard's Greek tutor after the sudden departure of Jones Very in 1838. In the summer of 1836, Wheeler had built himself a place on the shore of Flint's Pond in Lincoln, Massachusetts, just two miles from Walden Pond, for the purpose of studying and translating the works of the ancient Greeks. Thoreau joined his friend that first summer, and they spent six weeks together at the "shanty" on the shore. According to Ellery Channing, it was "highly probable that Mr. Wheeler's experiment suggested Mr. Thoreau's, as he was a man he almost worshipped" (*Familiar Letters* 69). Wheeler continued to work on the two Classical Greek texts that he published in his lifetime, before pursuing his studies in Europe in 1842 (Eidson 54). Prior to his departure, Wheeler spoke at both the Concord Lyceum, on March 18, 1840, and at Margaret Fuller's Conversations, from March 1 through May 7, 1841, on the topic of Greek mythology, among other subjects (Eidson 48). His contribution to the Transcendentalist movement was cut short due to his early death in June, 1843. "His death was a great grief and a great shock," writes Caroline Healey Dall, who called Wheeler "the only sound Greek scholar among us … from whom much was expected" (Eidson 22).

and discover the genius in great books just as Wheeler used his shanty as a place of study in Classical Greek texts.[22] In his Journal for 1842-1844, Thoreau imagines himself living in the woods, committing himself to a regimen of intense reading:

> I have thought when walking in the woods . . . far from the village . . . how my life might pass there, simple and true and natural . . . How many books I might not read—how, under such circumstances, I should select my reading. Might I not read only henceforth serene truth! Never statistics, nor news, nor reports—nor periodicals, only great poems, and when they failed, read them *again*, or write more." (*PJ* 2: 90)

Thoreau would read his share of Classical poetry, but by the time he got to the pond he had begun moving away from poetry of all kinds to focus instead on other genres of reading and writing. Thoreau planned to use much of his time at Walden reading, eventually, that is. As he puts it, with the exception of the *Iliad*, which he glanced at a few times, and "one or two shallow books of travel" (*Walden* 100), "I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans" (*Walden* 111). By keeping Homer on his desk, Thoreau says, "I sustained myself by the prospect of such reading in future." Like the surplus of beans he harvests, reading is equally sustaining for Thoreau. For that first year at the pond, at least, Thoreau kept a small number of books to sustain him, at least one of which contained Plato's dialogues, the *Republic* most likely among them.

Thoreau's ideal philosopher was, as was the case with many of his fellow Transcendentalists, some version of Plato's true philosopher. "When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, —that

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[22] See Margaret Fuller's letter of October 18, 1841, in which she says, "Let me know whether you go to the lonely hut, and write me about Shakespeare, if you read him there" (*Correspondence* I: 94) This could be referring to the Hollowell Farm but a hut is hardly a farmhouse.

petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality" (*Walden* 95-96). Rather than "closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows" (*Walden* 96), Thoreau's philosopher sees through the illusions of everyday life and, with simplicity, shows others the way.

"Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

Once "Economy" establishes how he lived at Walden Pond, Thoreau considers the moral and spiritual significance of Walden Pond in *Walden*'s second chapter, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For." This essential chapter of *Walden*, indeed, is certainly a more effective starting point for the narrative than "Economy," the lengthy chapter that precedes it. It is the foundation, the "*point d'appui*" of Thoreau's excursion, a call to the "higher life" given in the voice of a Transcendentalist "chanticleer," waking up those who would "by closing the eyes and slumbering … establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit every where, which still is built on purely illusory foundations" (*Walden* 96), so that they might instead "live in infinite expectation of the dawn" (*Walden* 90). Yes, he had said something to this effect earlier, and seems to repeat himself when he speaks of simplicity (as if saying it once was not simple enough.) The business focus of that first chapter, however, was entirely different. Where "Economy" describes his project as a social experiment, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" pronounces Thoreau's *literary* experiment. Or to put it another way, one chapter establishes a degree of authenticity for the narrative, the other acquires for it a level of authority.

Thoreau would inaugurate his experiment in self-reliance, or "enterprise," as he called it, in the "art of life" by moving to the shore of Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts, to live in a 10' by 15' house of his own construction on Independence Day, 1845. Over the next two years,

two months, and two days, Thoreau committed to a life of "simplicity," a lived philosophy that he hoped would elevate him spiritually.[23] As he explains in chapter two of *Walden*:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to 'glorify God and enjoy him forever.' (*Walden* 90)

Thoreau indicates how he shall "live deliberately." His resolution to "live deliberately" recognizes the moral value in a specific mode of living, one that ventures heroically into a more natural state and thereby creates connection with the natural world. In doing so, Thoreau rejects the commercialism of his antebellum society as well as a conventional religion whose members he feels advance little beyond their catechism. And with this resolve to "live deliberately," he also rejects the sense of time that these individuals, in their "strange uncertainty," rush

[23] I use the term "lived philosophy" as opposed to an intellectual philosophy. It is what Hannah Arendt calls the *vita activa* versus the *vita contemplativa*.

"*somewhat hastily*" to the meaning of life, rather than, Thoreau implies, appreciate what is "here" in the world.

Thoreau conceives of *Walden* as both a "conscious endeavor" (*Walden* 90) and a kind of literary experiment, one in which the author divests himself of any connection to a modern, English literary tradition, and appeals directly to the Classics, "forever new and unprofaned" like the Olympian temple he builds for himself at the Pond. After some "Complemental Verses" courtesy of Thomas Carey, on "The Pretensions of Poverty," this chapter starts with an older Greco-Roman inspired "experiment," what was originally a short essay titled, "A Poet Buying a Farm," which appeared in *Sartain's Union Magazine* in August of 1852, and begins, "At a certain season of our life we are *accustomed* to consider every spot as the possible site of a house" (*Walden* 81). There is, perhaps, a subtle allusion here in the word "accustomed" to the Greek word *ethos*, which literally means "an accustomed place." Thoreau was fascinated with etymology, and given his conviction that a poet is one who recovers the meanings of words, the emphasis here is plausible. This attention to meaning is also how the author exercises his authority over language. Of course, in rhetoric, *ethos* signifies the moral authority of a speaker, in essence the voice or character of a writer. Thus, to speak with authority, one needs to find his accustomed place. And this is what Thoreau hopes to accomplish in the purchase of the Hollowell Farm. While he had seen some other like poets "withdraw" after picking a few meager apples of inspiration, he was more attracted to the place of the farm—in both time and space, in past and present. But having found that he was more accustomed to pastoral fantasy than georgic reality, he decides to follow the advice of "Old Cato," an agricultural writer, saying, "I think I shall not buy greedily, but go round and round it as long as I live, and be buried in it first, that it may please me the more at last" (*Walden* 84). Thoreau later recognizes the folly of a pastoral

vision that does not acknowledge the reality of labor, of earning a living from the land; or as he puts it, "What should we think of the shepherd's life if his flocks always wandered to higher pastures than his thoughts?" (*Walden* 88).

Still, Thoreau seeks the kind of authority that comes with a connection to the earth. "What is a house but a *sedes*, a seat? — better if a country seat," he says (*Walden* 81). Virgil, who uses the word in the sense of a "home" in the *Aeneid* and as a "site" for one in *Georgics: Book Four*, is the model, the archetype for the poet of nature—but of a nature that is not separate from but commensurate with the human. Thoreau notes in his Journal for Fall 1837 that, "I would read Virgil if only to be reminded of the identity of human nature in all ages" (*PJ* 1:14). Thoreau remarks that "one must needs climb a hill to know what a world he inhabits." One may elevate oneself with thoughts, but if the poet has no connection with the natural world, the poet is no authority in it. This is, according to Robert Richardson, "the cornerstone of Thoreau's mature thought, the basis and starting point for his most deeply held, most characteristic convictions about history, nature, society, and the individual" (*Henry David Thoreau* 8).

In his commitment to the georgic vision of Virgil, Thoreau makes New England a place of possibility for the poet, and makes the place of Walden a project of recovery by establishing connection with a mythical and historical past. "The present was my next experiment of this kind," he declares, as the chapter shifts to its discussion of "that part of creation where [Thoreau] had squatted," where Thoreau speaks to the value of becoming unaccustomed with the world as one knows it for the sake of a spiritual "awakening" (*Walden* 84, 88, 89). Thoreau proclaims that "every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself," and that he was "as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the

Greeks" (*Walden* 88).[24] Thoreau's connection to himself is an awakening in natural time, to a dawn within. "It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men," he maintains, "morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me" (*Walden* 89-90). Despite the "auroral" character of Walden in Thoreau's imagination, he cannot help but speak ironically of its beauty in terms of monetary value. While the "most value" of a lake is the vistas it lends us, on "tiptoe" he sees mountains as "those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village" (*Walden* 87). Thoreau's metaphor mixes the monetary with the moral. Nevertheless, Thoreau insists that this, like our conceptions of the earth as "continent" are illusions, "like a coin in a basin."

To speak of value then is ultimately to acknowledge the transactions that perpetuate our socially constructed illusions that are the "Shams and delusions … esteemed for soundest truths," that blind us to the fabulous reality that surrounds us:

> If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. (*Walden* 95-96)

In this refashioning of Plato's Allegory, the choice of literature to which Thoreau alludes is telling. Fairy tales and the stories of Scheherazade are fantastic and exotic, especially when compared with the Biblical fables and proverbs that circulate in a New England culture raised on a "primer" that teaches children the Christian catechism that "the chief end of man here is to

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[24] Emerson concludes *Nature* with an observation that "God is a morning knowledge" (*CW* 1:43).

‘glorify God and enjoy him forever.’” Thoreau’s strategy chastises his audience in the style of the jeremiad, but simultaneously appeals to their youthful sense of wonder. In this way, Thoreau engages in multiple forms of moral authority. Thoreau’s development of a sense of place proceeds by a similar route. According to David Robinson, it “depended upon his developing a form of description … which would also allow him to elaborate the larger spiritual and ethical significance” of a particular place (“The Written World” 83). By taking Walden outside of the New England narrative and placing it in a Classic, cosmic, child-like place of purity and possibility, Thoreau creates “a form of expression that would yoke his social alienation and desire for escape into a sustainable ethical stance” (“The Written World” 91).

One question we are left asking—not just of Thoreau but perhaps of all Transcendentalists—is why the literary aesthetic must necessarily be an ethical one. In defense of his own literary experiment, Thoreau writes:

> I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done. (*Walden* 90)

The artist of the beautiful is the artist of the moral and the ethical, and his art extends beyond the page, beyond the object of his vision. It moves even beyond the individual. It affects, it moves through society, creating a sense of place within a community of individuals. The optimism with

which Thoreau counters the idealism that temporarily dismayed Emerson recovers physical nature from feelings of dejection and resignation.

The source of Thoreau's moral authority, or *ethos*, is eventually found in the place Thoreau becomes *accustomed* to in his time at Walden Pond, by way of a reform that proceeds by self-reliant individualism and ripples across the pond of the universe. "Both place and time were changed," he says, "and I dwelt nearer to those parts of the universe and to those eras in history which most attracted me. Where I lived was as far off as many a region viewed nightly by astronomers" (*Walden* 87-88), as if to say that Walden exists in a realm both real and imaginary where time becomes unfixed. Thoreau's cosmic imagery takes the transcendent visions of time and place to him without having to leave his house on the pond:

> Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages. (*Walden* 96-97)

Time and place, however distant they may appear, are in the "now and here" in a connection with the divine. This is, Thoreau believes, because "The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions," adding, "whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us" (*Walden* 97). In contrast to secular time, represented by the railroad, a corresponding sacred time is available to the poet and artist within. "Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature," he says, "and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails" (97). Toward the end of the chapter, Thoreau uses the term "*point d'appui*," a strategic point, to describe a "hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is,

and no mistake" (*Walden* 98). The point of contact that is Walden Pond becomes in the book *Walden* an ethos, a place of moral ground where one finds the real.

Sensing Walden

At the end of "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," Thoreau tells his reader that "time is but the stream I go a-fishing in" and that "its thin current slides away, but eternity remains (*Walden* 98). That eternal permanence, Thoreau maintains, can be found in sensation; and it is through the sense of sound in particular that the truth in the natural world reveals itself.

The chapter "Reading" begins with the assertion that humanity might be better off as "students and observers" (*Walden* 99). "In accumulating property for ourselves or our posterity, in founding a family or a state, or acquiring fame even"—all things that Thoreau seemed uninterested in—"we are mortal; but in dealing with truth we are immortal," he believes (*Walden* 99). Thoreau then goes on to describe the image of an ancient "Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher [who] raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity," in an act of literal revelation that approaches intimacy. "I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did," Thoreau imagines, "since it was I in him that was so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on that robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed" (*Walden* 99). The revelatory act of reading, an intimate act shared between the writer and the reader, is impervious to the dust of history, but not exactly outside of time. "That time which we really improve, or which is improvable," Thoreau argues, "is neither past, present, nor future" (*Walden* 99).

While "many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book," Thoreau would not be content to be "a reader, a student merely," but to be one who is attentive to and appreciative of the language of the natural world (*Walden* 107, 111). So much is said in "Sounds," the first chapter in *Walden* to immerse the reader in a sensuous, somewhat mystical

experience. To enjoy the sensual pleasures of nature, to fully immerse oneself in the now means not idleness but a kind of spiritual industriousness. As Thoreau describes it, there were times when he "could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work" (*Walden* 111). Necessary labor—as opposed to labor that supports the frivolous consumerism that Thoreau rails against—can steal time away from moments of religious transcendence.[25] Thus the reader finds Thoreau sitting in his "sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiseless through the house" (*Walden* 111). Listening to the sounds that vibrate through the woods, his house, and himself, Thoreau makes contact with his place of being.

Thoreau's sense of place is a presence that has its own natural time. Losing himself in the moment, he is "reminded of the lapse of time" only by the setting sun or the sound of a wagon on the road nearby (*Walden* 111). The interval between is a timelessness, an "undisturbed solitude and stillness." Defending himself against the charge of "idleness," Thoreau tells his Yankee townsmen that his time was not squandered. "I grew in those seasons like corn in the night," he insists, condensing his prodigious season into a single day and an image of aspiring corn stalks reaching to the heavens above. Rather than time "subtracted" from his life, Thoreau says it was "so much over and above my usual allowance" (*Walden* 111, 112).

Other sounds connect Thoreau to the woods of Walden. Breaking into the tranquility of Thoreau's day is the sound of the "iron horse." The railroad rattles past Thoreau's house and reminds him of a world outside of Walden that does things "railroad fashion" by living according to a timetable. Likewise, the sounds of Thoreau's surroundings include those that oppress the

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[25] In *A Republic in Time* (2008), Thomas M. Allen argues that Thoreau "strives to fill time with value in order to create a template for representative American personhood compatible with the market but committed to moral perfection" (137), drawing a comparison to the "domestic time" of Catharine Beecher's *A Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1841).

animal and vegetable life—the breaking of branches, the screeching of a hawk, and the like. They are the sounds of time's end for some of the living inhabitants of Walden. His Sunday meditations, meanwhile, were accompanied by the "natural melody" of church bells that cause the woods to vibrate in unison, and produce its own "original sound" in an "echo"—"not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice of the wood; the same trivial words and notes sung by a wood-nymph" (*Walden* 123). Together, they culminate in a crescendo that cries out like the rooster crowing to awaken humanity to a life in harmony with nature. In Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism, the harmonic resonance of sound registers as an impulse that preempts any perception of its meaning.

"Our Common Dwelling"

Having communicated through "Reading" and "Sounds," *Walden* realizes its most sacred contact with nature in "Solitude." The chapter begins, "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me" (*Walden* 129). The opening paragraph is an homage to Emerson's *Nature*, wherein he describes how while "crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a cloudy sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration" (*CW* 1:10) Robert Milder points out that "where Emerson is passive and wholly spiritual, a bodiless 'eye-ball' *receiving* 'the currents of the Universal Being' and *seeing* all (*CW* 1:10), Thoreau is active and physical, a permeable skin '*imbib[-ing]* delight through every pore' and *feeling* all" (86). Having spent the day observing and listening to the world from the liminal space of his doorway and window, Thoreau's body

becomes unified in "one sense" in the evening "repose," delighting in nature while "a part of herself." Now that he observes himself in nature, Thoreau can not only see his place in the natural world but has in every sense a feeling for nature.

Society is both a connection with the human community and one a felt resonance in the natural world, according to Thoreau. He returns to his house to find that visitors have called in his absence, leaving signs of their having been there as well as tokens of their affection. The presence of society at the empty house accentuates Thoreau's solitude. At the same time, Thoreau intimates, "I experienced sometimes that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object" (*Walden* 131). He describes this relationship as a sort of friendliness. He enjoys the "friendship" of the seasons. "In the midst of a gentle rain," he exclaims, "I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since" (*Walden* 132). The ease with which Thoreau rejects the "fancied advantages" of human community stands in contrast to the society he welcomes to his house in "Visitors." But for now, Thoreau's preference for solitude and immersion in nature is, at this juncture, taken as a gesture toward something beyond romantic organicism. It is an affinity or affect, a Thoreauvian connection with the non-human world.

Like the sound that animates the pine needles like "the strings of a harp" (*Walden* 123), "every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended" Thoreau, and made him aware of a "presence of something kindred" to him (*Walden* 132). This presence is both a physical and metaphysical phenomenon that suggests a spiritual law of the universe. Men

want most to dwell nearer to “the perennial source of our life,” that which makes life in both its physical and spiritual aspects (*Walden* 133). That thing, for Thoreau, is not the human community for, as he admits, “I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time” (*Walden* 135). It is instead the place he has created for himself in nature where he finds an escape from even the radical isolation of idealism. “Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. *Next* to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. *Next* to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are” (*Walden* 134). This proximity to power is clearly not to Emerson’s God within but both a personal and impersonal power that is “next” to human consciousness.

Here and elsewhere in the early chapters, *Walden* reaffirms that the natural is nearer to the moral and that one’s connection to nature is moral. While he hesitates to identify this affecting source as spirit, he does, however, speak in terms of affect in describing consciousness:

> With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the drift-wood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I *may* be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I *may not* be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than it is you. (*Walden* 135)

Temporality and timelessness are once again represented in the stream of time.[26] Time and eternity, embodied in the piece of driftwood and in a Hindu god, may be experienced simultaneously through emotional connection. Alternatively, one may be detached from the experience, drifting passively through life as opposed to being moved by human drama. The solitude that is the "doubleness" of human consciousness, Thoreau contends, is not unlike that of interpersonal connection.

Where Emerson might see a solipsism for the God within the self, Thoreau sees the potential for unity in "our common dwelling" that is nature (*Walden* 124). Praising "The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature,—of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter,—such health, such cheer, they afford forever!", Thoreau asks, "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (*Walden* 138) To have "intelligence with the earth" is to have intelligence with that which created the earth—whether that be God, spirit, or life itself—and the way Thoreau achieves this relation is by enjoying nature, drawing health from it and taking delight in the world by seeking connection with it.

While what constitutes the first draft of *Walden* culminates in "Higher Laws," a kind of spiritual decrescendo occurs in the several chapters that follow and that are more detailed descriptions of the day-to-day life at the pond through winter and into spring. They are, perhaps, also more ethically complicated than the more idyllic chapters of the 1849 draft. They represent the "meanness" of life Thoreau pursued at Walden and more firmly anchor him in the place of the pond and in the ever-shifting present that is "our common dwelling."

[26] Alan D. Hodder also connects the images in this passage to the image of the stream of time, as well as explains how this passage is indebted to Eastern and Hindu sources. For a full explication, see Hodder, *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (2001), 196-201.

“A Different Drummer”

As he was in the process of revising his original *Walden* manuscript, Thoreau was initiating what would be a life-long correspondence with educator Harrison Gray Otis Blake, a friend in Worcester, Massachusetts.[27] Emerson had introduced the two men to each other in 1848. Blake would become Thoreau’s first true admirer, giving him the audience he needed to test out his claims to spiritual truth. “I would be roused,” Blake told Thoreau, “to a truer and purer life” by the words he wrote to him (*Correspondence* 1:357). In his first letter to Blake, dated March 27, 1848, Thoreau reflects on his abilities as both a conversationalist and a writer: “I am glad to hear that any words of mine, though spoken so long ago that I can hardly claim identity with their author, have reached you. It gives me pleasure because I have therefore reason to suppose that I have uttered what concerns men, and that it is not in vain that man speaks to man. This is the value of literature” (*Correspondence* 1:359). Though his words have made a lasting impression, Thoreau barely recognizes his past self whose words so inspired Blake. This, Thoreau argues, is the value of literature—the ability to sound truth like chanticleer in the morning, regardless of how subjective it is or how egotistical the exercise may seem to his neighbors. Truth must be attested to, at each dawning of the soul, to be heard and reaffirmed. The intimacy of correspondence that Thoreau and Blake share is another example of Thoreau’s affective Transcendentalism at its most personal.

In that first letter, Thoreau takes on the role of prophet to Blake’s disciple, sharing his spiritual philosophy with him and making grand pronouncements. He speaks of the “higher life”

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[27] See J. Lyndon Shanley, *The Making of Walden: With the Text of the First Version* (1957). Shanley builds on the research of Ronald E. Clapper (“The Development of Walden: A Genetic Text.” Ph.D. diss. UCLA, 1967.) For an extended analysis of how *Walden* changes over its history of composition, see Robert Sattelmeyer, “The Remaking of Walden” in *Writing the American Classics*, ed. James Barbour and Tom Quirk (1990), 53-78; and Robert Milder, *Reimagining Thoreau* (1995). For a complete textual study of Thoreau’s works, see Stephen Adams and Donald Ross, Jr., *Revising Mythologies: The Composition of Thoreau’s Major Works* (1988).

and “simplicity,” that “men cannot conceive of a state of things so fair that it cannot be realized” (*Correspondence* 1:359, 360, 361). As for himself, Thoreau insists, “My actual life is a fact in view of which I have no occasion to congratulate myself, but for my faith and aspiration I have respect.” He continues, “I have sworn no oath. I have no designs on society—or nature—or God. I am simply what I am, or I begin to be that. I *live* in the *present*. I only remember the past—and anticipate the future. I love to live.” Any relation he may have to “society—or nature—or God” is inferior to his relationship with time, specifically the “present.”

What Thoreau saw in Blake was a “different drummer,” not unlike himself. Not unlike in *A Week*, when the Thoreau brothers were captivated by the sounds of a distant drummer, one “hears a different drummer” in *Walden*. In its “Conclusion,” *Walden*’s author reflects on his individuality and his choice to live as deliberately as he has. “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer,” he says. “Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.” It is not the martial drumming up of order in the universe heard in *A Week* but a playful dance of life that *Walden* choreographs.

Here, in the conclusion to *Walden*, Thoreau returns again to the eternal, specifically in its fable about the artist of Kouroo. In the story, the artist, striving for perfection, devotes himself solely to his art, and in doing so, transcends time: “As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way.” The artist had only just begun when the city of Kouroo fell into ruin. As he carves his staff, the Candahar dynasty falls away, the pole star changes, and “Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times,” until finally,

> When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with fun and fair proportions; in which, though the

> old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The material was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful? (*Walden* 326-27)

The artist of Kouroo transcends time and connects with the eternal in each moment that he devotes to creating his art. The art he creates in turn creates "a new system," "a world with fun and fair proportions" of more "glorious" cities. Like the artist of Kouroo, striving to perfect his art, Thoreau spends his days following his directive, pursuing the art of life, for what seemed to some to be an age. Thoreau, who seeks to represent the eternal in *Walden*, feels he has created something pure because of the book's own relationship with time—that is, its disregard for it. The illusory life of two years, two months, and two days, condensed into one circle of seasons, and crafted over a decade, made *Walden* something timeless and "the fairest of all creations."

Where Thoreau goes after he leaves the woods of Walden are to places where the sense of contact changes. First, in *The Maine Woods*, Thoreau goes from an ecstatic contact with the "actual world" to connecting with an actual person. Then in "Walking," Thoreau finds something in an immanent present. Instead of the culmination of God, he anticipates a sacred time and place in futurity.

"Contact" in *The Maine Woods*

While Thoreau was living at Walden Pond, he made his first excursion to the woods of Maine. What eventually became *The Maine Woods* is the result of Thoreau's revisiting Maine in a series of trips over a span of almost sixteen years. This is not the first cyclical journey for

Thoreau. He imagines his two-week boating trip as *A Week*, and his two years, two months, and two days at Walden as a yearlong cycle of the seasons. What makes the circular narrative of *The Maine Woods* significant is that it has the effect of bringing a maturing Thoreau back again into contact with his subject. As Thoreau navigates through the North Maine Woods, he moves from an intense, metaphysical encounter with "the *actual* world," toward a more human one, specifically as he gets to know an actual person, his last Penobscot guide, Joe Polis.

"Ktaadn" is, like *A Week*, a spiritual journey to ascend a mountain, though this time he would have to travel through a primitive wilderness to get there. Part of the story, however, is Thoreau's encounters with pioneers and loggers of Maine's burgeoning lumber industry. At the time when Thoreau made his journey to Mount Katahdin, he was one year into his Walden Pond experiment. What he found in the Maine Woods reminded him of his own scheme. Observing one settler's method of planting potatoes, Thoreau moans,

> Let those talk of poverty and hard times who will, in the towns and cities; cannot the emigrant, who can pay his fare to New-York or Boston, pay five dollars more to get here, —I paid three, all told, for my passage from Boston to Bangor, 250 miles, —and be as rich as he pleases, where land virtually costs nothing, and house only the labor of building, and he may begin life as Adam did? (*MW* 14)

Thoreau imagines a new Adam, awakening in the Garden to a paradise rich with vegetation and solitude, rewarded by his own industry of cultivation with an immediate immersion in nature.

In Maine, Thoreau sees how the self is shaped by one's contact and connection with the world.[28] The most intense of Thoreau's encounters with the north woods of Maine comes in

[28] James Finley has made a similar claim about "contact," describing Thoreau's excursion into Maine consists of a series of encounters within various "contact zones" which allow for Thoreau's "transculturation" through his many multicultural and environmental contacts. See James S. Finley, "'Who Are We? Where Are We?': Contact and Literary Navigation in *The Maine Woods*" (2012), 336–355.

"Ktaadn." As he goes forth into the wilderness, Thoreau goes where no Transcendentalist had gone before—walking "buoyantly in Indian file," right up to "the true source of evil" (*MW* 16) that lurks within the beautiful forest he describes at every turn. There is a contrast between the intimacy that Thoreau feels for nature's beauty and what Robert Milder describes as "an immense, transhuman [nature] capable of enclosing the dark and violent in nature and accommodating its indifference to human ends" (89). It is not until he "most fully realized" (*MW* 69) the "vast, and drear, and inhuman" (*MW* 70) state of nature that he is prepared to question the meaning of our sense of connectedness. Passing over the "Burnt Lands," Thoreau experiences an epiphany:

> Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful. I looked with awe at the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was that Earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man's garden, but the unhandselled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever, —to be the dwelling of man, we say, —so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it. It was Matter, vast and terrific, —not his Mother Earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in, —no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there—the home this of Necessity and Fate. There was there felt the presence of a force not bound to be kind to man. It was a place for heathenism and superstitious rites, —to be inhabited by men nearer of kin to the rocks and to wild animals than we. We walked over it with a certain awe, stopping from time to time to

> pick the blueberries which grew there, and had a smart and spicy taste. Perchance where *our* wild pines stand, and leaves lie on their forest floor in Concord, there were once reapers, and husbandmen planted grain; but here not even the surface has been scarred by man, but it was a specimen of what God saw fit to make this world. What is it to be admitted to a museum, to see a myriad of particular things, compared with being shown some star's surface, some hard matter in its home! I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, or which I am one, —*that* my body might, —but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! —Think of our life in nature, —daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, —rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense! Contact! Contact! Who* are we? *where* are we?" (*MW* 70-71).

The sublimity of the inhospitable landscape provokes a feeling of dread, as this world of "matter, vast and terrific," has a profound alienating effect. Furthermore, in this "place for heathenism and superstitious rites," the secularity that defines Thoreau's nineteenth century world has disappeared, adding to Thoreau's estrangement. Any sense of connection with the self is lost in "Ktaadn" when the mind makes contact with *the actual*—the terrifying realization of the indifference of our material existence. The existential nightmare that Thoreau encounters on Mount Katahdin will loom in the background of "Chesuncook" and "Allegash and East Branch" as a reminder of the spiritual lesson of ascending to great heights, while down below, Thoreau becomes focused on more earthly matters, and embracing that which keeps him tethered to his human experience.[29]

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[29] A different interpretation of Thoreau's "contact" and the passage which mentions the "true source of evil" in *The Maine Woods* is offered by Ronald Wesley Hoag. According to Hoag, "Thoreau's 'true source of evil' is revealed as

What begins, then, as a Transcendentalist quest to confront, as Thoreau put it, the "true source of evil," becomes a journey out of a natural state of indifference. The name for this indifference is, in the Romantic's vocabulary, dejection. Our dejected state is the moral dilemma of *Walden*, in which the narrator promises not to write an "ode to dejection," but to try effect the opposite, this despite the fact that one's song may have the power only to stir one's neighbors to a shared awareness of our mutual state of melancholy which necessitates our own chanticleer-like reveries. In *The Maine Woods*, Thoreau must reckon with this problem in a place that defies human expression. The tradition of romantic nature poetry, he reminds us, is of no recourse here. No "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," nor any "Windsor-Forrest" is possible, at least not at present. The vastness he sees verges on Miltonic "darkness and Chaos." And yet, along "the shores of America," the daunting "no mans land" of virgin newness, there exist others equally isolated who promise the traveler the possibility of sanctuary, and will for all time. This optimistic tone in the coda to "Ktaadn" is seemingly at odds with Thoreau's earlier alienation. Thoreau steps right out of the deep time of the forest and back into the national time that first brought him into it, side-stepping the moral dilemma of "Ktaadn"'s contact with "the actual." Nevertheless, the question is not, of course, what must be done to discover and settle the shores, but how it feels in that moment to be in such a place as unsettling as the wilderness that, as Thoreau discovers, has long been a place for human community.

Connections are, at best, only half realized by the time he leaves "Ktaadn" over that "half built bridge" to Oldtown. When he returns to Maine in "Chesuncook," Thoreau does not see the problem in idealizing "the red face of man" while in the same breath saying that the actual Indians he meets are somehow "degraded." He is much more concerned with the practical ethics

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man, not nature; and the 'Contact!' episode is transformed into the psychological record of an experience that, while personally chastening to Thoreau, serves only to confirm his transcendental faith" (23).

of forestry and wildlife. The “Chesuncook” chapter contains within it an environmental awareness that anticipates something like deep ecology and post-humanism. But when Thoreau displays a sympathy for “the pine” and “the moose,” he is experimenting with ways of feeling. At the time he had composed this essay, Thoreau had already railed against “Slavery in Massachusetts” and would align himself with the radical John Brown a year later. Thus, the rhetoric of reform here is self-reflexive, critiquing the way that sentimental pleas to end slavery so often express a hypocritical sympathy when it comes to the idea of race. “There is a higher law affecting our relation to pines as well as to men” (*MW* 121), Thoreau says. “The pine is no more lumber than man is, and to be made into boards and houses is no more its true and highest use than the truest use of a man is to be cut down and made into manure,” to which he adds, “just as if a stronger race were to kill us in order to make buttons and flageolets of our bones; for everything may serve a lower as well as a higher use.” Thoreau is not advocating for a new utopia where the sanctity of life is preserved universality. He is a poet, and a poet’s duty is to make one see and feel in ways that may elude our common sense. The feeling that we are left with is a radical ambivalence about what it means to be human.

In the final excursion on “The Allegash and East Branch,” Thoreau most captures the feeling of human connectedness through his friendship with his guide, Joe Polis. Again, it is not his own sentimental feelings for Polis but rather the connection that this final excursion instantiates with this other person whose story Thoreau as narrator privileges over his own. Through his ironic posturing, continually referring to Polis as “the Indian” as he had done with earlier guide Joe Atteon, Thoreau reveals himself to be critical of his own venture as the author of the excursion. Yet there is a beauty that unfolds in the honesty of their relationship. Polis’s reticence gives way to much conversation and even horseplay, and Thoreau’s ethnographic

curiosity becomes something less awkward and more like genuine admiration. Contact thus has a transforming effect on Thoreau.

With each successive return to the woods of Maine, Thoreau realizes that our human understanding deepens with our continual re-experiencing of ourselves as a part of nature, and changing with it. Because of this recognition, *The Maine Woods* is sometimes read as a parable, where in which Thoreau gradually becomes an environmentalist or an enlightened liberal through his interactions with trees, moose, and Indians. But that reading moralizes the various kinds of contact that Thoreau makes in Maine, whereas Thoreau's excursion narrative is more about how change unfolds within the individual by experience. And as an excursion narrative, it has its own set of expectations. It exists not just for the pleasure of traveling but for the purpose of seeking. The narrator goes where he goes precisely because it allows him to think and feel differently. At the same time that the narrator is searching and navigating the wilderness, so, too, is the reader, searching and navigating both the natural history and the human register of the Maine Woods.

Over time, Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism of contact becomes more naturalized. Whereas the digression on friendship *in A Week* told what Thoreau felt about friendship in rather lofty terms, his contact with Joe Polis in *The Maine Woods* evokes what that sense of connection feels like.

"Sympathy with Intelligence"

Through his various forms of excursions, Thoreau conveys his connection with the eternal. The mystical quest of *A Week*, the sense of place cultivated in *Walden*, and the revisiting of *The Maine Woods*, all these literary excursions bring Thoreau into a relation with time that is the basis for his religious experiences with nature or the natural world. Thoreau will

conceptualize this relation in what would be the culminating experience of his literary excursions, his posthumously published essay "Walking," in which he comes to speak of "Sympathy with Intelligence." Here, in final iteration of Thoreau's affective Transcendentalism, the sense of contact evolves into a higher form, one that brings with it the moral imperative for justice.

Much of the essay that came to be "Walking" began as Journal entries during the same period of major revisions to the *Walden* manuscript, written sometime in November of 1850 and in January-February of 1851, although some sentences can be found in the Journal as early as 1842-1844 and as late as February 1852.[30] Over the next decade, Thoreau gave "Walking, or the Wild" as a lecture on a number of different occasions. It eventually became one of several pieces that Thoreau offered to publisher James T. Fields for the *Atlantic Monthly* before his death in May 1862. "Walking" eventually appeared in the June 1862 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Composed during the height of abolitionist activity in Concord and among the Transcendentalists, as well as during the higher law debates leading up to the Civil War, "Walking" heralds the call for freedom.[31] Thoreau begins, "I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute Freedom and Wildness, as contrasted with a Freedom and Culture merely civil,— to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society" (*Excursions* 185). Nature's freedom is a more radical one. The individual is as much a part of

[30] See the Headnote for "Walking" in Henry D. Thoreau, *Excursions* (2007), 561.
[31] The most thoroughgoing account of Henry David Thoreau's abolitionist activities, as well as those of his Concord family, friends, and fellow citizens, is given by Sandra Harbert Petrulionis in *To Set This World Right: The Antislavery Movement in Thoreau's Concord* (2006). In her study of Thoreau and Concord abolitionism, Petrulionis "frames the evolution of Thoreau's antislavery ideology as a product of his community's activism—from its emergence in the early 1830s, to gradual support for William Lloyd Garrison's immediatist and disunionist platforms, to the harboring of runaway slaves, to, finally, the unconditional embrace of John Brown's violent, revolutionary agenda by moderates and radicals alike" (3). For a concise overview of the higher law debates surrounding the speeches of New York senator William H. Seward and New Hampshire senator Daniel Webster, see Daniel S. Malachuk, *Two Cities: The Political Thought of American Transcendentalism* (2016), 103-106.

society as he is a natural man with a higher claim to freedom. That freedom is exercised in the simplest way, in the “art of walking” or “sauntering.”

Walking is a form of consciousness—the physical exercise of freedom, both body and mind. Thoreau says, “I feel alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit…I am not where my body is; I am out of my senses” (*Excursions* 190). Sense perception is, in other words, spiritual perception. There is an affinity that guides his peripatetic meditation, a moral directive, one that attracts him to the woods: “I believe that there is a subtle magnetism in Nature, which, if we unconsciously yield to it, will direct us aright” (*Excursions* 195). This “subtle magnetism” that directs Thoreau, like the needle of a compass, is a sensation for freedom. Like the sense of contact, this affinity brings one into contact with one’s own senses. “In my walks,” Thoreau says, “I would fain return to my senses” (*Excursions* 190). Walking brings one toward one’s natural state, removed from the constraints of civilization.

The direction of freedom, the direction of futurity, is the West, where Thoreau can discover the possibilities of the immanent future: “We go eastward to realize history, and study the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race,—we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure” (*Excursions* 196). Thoreau goes westward to undertake his crusade to claim the holy land that he calls wildness. To be sure, the art of sauntering takes pilgrimage as a pretense to what some might consider a form of idleness. Yet there is a directive, and that points west: “The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild” (*Excursions* 202). And “Wild,” it may be surmised, is a name for another form of spirit. For Thoreau, there is everything to be discovered in both the western frontiers of the United States as well as in the wilds of the spirit. Thoreau makes his declaration “that in Wildness is the

preservation of the world." All life, plant and animal, moves toward it. It is "nourishment and vigor" upon which whole civilizations are nurtured. Therefore, it is necessary for society, culture, civilization itself to preserve its connection to the wild—what lies outside of the cultivated spaces in the landscape and within a natural, wild part of the self with which one experiences connection—in order to flourish.

The pursuit of wildness, then, results in the consciousness that for all that is known there is a counterpart of unknown possibilities. All that can be quantified, rationalized, and reduced to some "Useful Knowledge" (*Excursions* 214) in the library of the mind is ultimately diffused, to use Thoreau's word. What has a lasting and more profound effect on the soul is "Useful Ignorance." He proclaims, "My desire for knowledge is intermittent; but my desires to bathe my head in atmospheres unknown to my feet is perennial and constant. The highest that we can attain to is not Knowledge, but Sympathy with Intelligence" (*Excursions* 215). Thoreau's affective connection with what is wild and free exists both with external nature and human nature, creating a union of the world and self, mind and spirit. It would appear that Thoreau has left aside his desire to make contact with eternity. But it is only because of the impossibility of beholding that knowledge. Nor would it be desirable to do so. The revelation (or revolution) of Hamlet-like consciousness that knows there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy is that there are limits to the human mind. Still, "It is the lighting up of the mist by the sun." There is beauty in the illumination of nature.

Finally, this uncommon sense is more than a passive sympathy, or a contact without a love that surmounts evil. "Above all," Thoreau believes that, "we cannot afford not to live in the present" (*Excursions* 220):

> He is blessed over all mortals who loses no moment of the passing life in remembering the past. Unless our philosophy hears the cock crow in every barn-yard within our horizon, it is belated. That sound commonly reminds us that we are growing rusty and antique in our employments and habits of thought. His philosophy comes down to a more recent time than ours. There is something suggested by it not in Plato nor the New Testament. It is a newer testament—the Gospel according to this moment. He has not fallen astern; he has got up early, and kept up early, and to be where he is, is to be in season, in the foremost rank of time. It is an expression of the health and soundness of Nature, a brag for all the world-healthiness as of a spring burst forth—a new fountain of the Muses, to celebrate this last instant of time. Where he lives no fugitive slave laws are passed. Who has not betrayed his master many times since last he heard that note? (*Excursions* 220-21)

Sympathy alone is not enough. One must possess the intelligence to recognize the moral imperative in oneself. Neither is a sense of contact with the world enough. One must have—and act—on one's sense of justice, of the right, of the ought. In Thoreau's day, the moral imperative to abolish slavery is what guided him aright. Thus, to live in the present ultimately means to commit oneself to moral action, to experience the joy in living and to follow through on one's moral convictions. The contact to be made is one with an immanent future in the present. It is through this evolved inner sense that Thoreau commits himself, the Yankee Chanticleer that he is, to a progressive view of humanity and time.

CHAPTER 4

Herman Melville and the Problem of Transcendentalist Spirit

On September 29th, 1855, the town of Concord, Massachusetts, consecrated the grounds of a new cemetery—the curiously named "Sleepy Hollow Cemetery." There, a crowd gathered on a hilly patch of land along the new road that would connect Concord to Bedford, about a mile from the site of the Old North Bridge and the Old Manse. The town prayed with Barzillai Frost, sang with Frank Sanborn, heard a poem by Ellery Channing, and listened to an address by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson had played a role in the creation of the cemetery, as had Henry David Thoreau, who excavated the seventeen-acre woodlot-turned-terraced garden creating an artificial pond which is now the swamp on the northern edge of the property. Sleepy Hollow would serve as an historic landmark for generations of Concord families, and as the final resting place for the Emersons, Thoreaus, Alcotts, and Hawthornes, it would also become a shrine to the town's literary genius. It seems rather disappointing, then, despite all this original, home-grown talent, that the best name which the planning committee could come up with was, of all things, a name taken from a Washington Irving tale. "*Sleepy Hollow* Cemetery"? In Tarrytown, sure, but in Concord? So much for self-reliance.

That same fall, Herman Melville completed "The Apple-Tree Table; Or, Original Spiritual Manifestations," a gothic parody inspired by the idea of a "Sleepy Hollow" in Concord.[1] Melville's story centers on a tormented narrator, a domesticated version of Ichabod Crane, residing in a home that bears a visual as well as a thematic resemblance to "The Old Manse." The narrator, his wife, and two daughters are frightened by what they believe are

[1] Melville most likely submitted "The Apple-Tree Table; Or, Original Spiritual Manifestations" to Harper and Brothers on October 8, 1855. Herman Melville, *Correspondence* (1993), 261.

"spirits" haunting their antique table, though they soon discover that these so-called "spirits" are no more than just a couple of noisy insects entombed for generations in the table's ancient wood. Entombment is the master metaphor within the "cedar-parlor" of this fictional household. Just as recurrent as shouts of "Spirits! spirits!" are the story's wooden motifs, including what the narrator mistakenly refers to as "Cotton Mather's 'Magnolia.'"

By the time it turns up in Melville's story, the apple-tree table already has quite a provenance as a New England folk legend. The "remarkable fact" of bug-infested furniture, initially reported in 1806, appears several times during the early part of the century.[2] The first of these sources can be found in a chapter from Timothy Dwight's *Travels in New-England and New-York* (1821). When Dwight's narrator hears about the strange occurrence, he reasons that such bugs persist in a dormant state as part of their life cycle. He also takes this natural, entomological fact that insect species are not all born at once or they may otherwise cause famine and pestilence as a sign of God, asking, "Who can fail to admire the wisdom and goodness displayed in this conduct of Providence?" (2:400). Chester Dewey offers a much different account in *A History of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts* (1829). This later version gives these "facts" some historical significance by way of their connection to the life of "Maj. Gen. Putnam," who may have planted the original tree from which the table was made, but Dewey says little more of it, considering the incident as simply a baffling mystery.

The legend of the apple-tree table is, like Irving's story of the headless horseman, a story about resurrection. Yet Melville's satire of the apple-tree table legend is a popular myth about spirit. While the idea of an immortal soul goes far back in ancient philosophy, the more ambiguous and romantic term "spirit"—which may refer either to the Neoplatontic soul or

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[2] For a gloss on the "original" of Melville's table, see Douglass Sackman, "The Original of Melville's The Apple-Tree Table" (1940).

signify a vital force or essence—had great cultural and religious significance in the mid-nineteenth century. The generally accepted belief in a spiritual ascension upon death emanating from the many postmillennial religious movements of the day stood in contrast to the biblical doctrine of bodily resurrection. Liberal Christianity in the form of Unitarianism and, by extension Transcendentalism, embraced this more abstract notion of spirit. The construction of the cemetery thus represented an acceptance of spirit as it was also understood by spiritualists. Indeed, by the 1850s, Transcendentalism circulated alongside spiritualism in periodicals such as *The Una*, *The Univercoelum and Spiritual Philosopher*, *The Spirit of the Age*, and *The Banner of Light*. On the surface spiritualism appeared to be the new Transcendentalism.

Meanwhile, Concord's sunny Transcendental spirit had been darkened by the gothic spirit of Nathaniel Hawthorne who, after honeymooning in the Old Manse with Sophia years ago in the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow, recently returned to Concord to live with his family on Lexington Road. Enter Herman Melville. Taking up the writings of both Thoreau and Hawthorne, Melville exposes the errors and the irony in beliefs about an afterlife that inspires such talk of spirits as well as the creation of a rural cemetery in Concord named after Washington Irving's most famous fictional place.

The "sad little hermit of a table" (466) in Melville's story had most recently turned up as a symbol of "resurrection and immortality" in the conclusion to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. There Thoreau recounts the story as a remarkable incident of natural history:

> Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts — from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as

> appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb — heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board — may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!" (*Walden* 333)

The "faith in a resurrection and immortality" Thoreau expresses here is echoed by one of the daughters in Melville's story who puts the rhetorical question to her astonished family: "should there be no glorified resurrection for the spirit of man?" (475). Frank Davidson was the first to point out the similarities between Melville's account and Thoreau's image of the apple-tree table story. He argues that beneath the "good-natured satire directed at spiritualists," Melville's story "records its author's thoughts on religion at a critical time in his life," and that the "inconclusive ending" speaks to the author's "conflicting and unresolved views" on Christianity (479).

Readings of this story that regard it as an ironic counterstatement to Thoreau or a send up of spiritualism tend to overlook the gothic surface of "The Apple-Tree Table" and thus the very subject of its parody.[3] What emerges from "The Apple-Tree Table" is the humbug of spirit—one that had become a central tenant within religious liberalism. By the mid-nineteenth century, the

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[3] One such reading is Carolyn L. Karcher's "The 'Spiritual Lesson' of Melville's 'The Apple-Tree Table'" (1970). Karcher makes some tenuous connections between "The Apple-Tree Table" and Orestes Brownson's fictional autobiography *The Spirit-Rapper* (1854).

romantic belief in an immortal, immaterial spirit had become popular faith, especially in New England. The liberal discourse of spirit also helped fuel the enthusiasm for rural cemeteries like the one in Concord. It is what the "learned professor" in the story dismisses as a "spiritual hypothesis" (475). Spiritualism was in fact a hypothesis put forward by some nineteenth-century scientists who theorized that immaterial spirits could exist with material nature. Melville, however, seems of the opinion that the nature-spirit dualism is redundant, a tautological error of natural philosophy. "The Apple-Tree Table," in its pointed satire, shows how a belief in resurrection or immortality is entangled in a kind of circular logic.[4]

The parody of Thoreau is rather obvious. Less apparent is how Melville addresses his satirical short story to Nathaniel Hawthorne, especially in its allusions to the Old Manse. It was there that Hawthorne and Thoreau began a personal and literary relationship that would continue throughout their lives. He may not have oscillated in Emerson's rainbow, but Hawthorne held Thoreau in high regard, as evidenced by the ways that Thoreau influenced the writing of *Mosses from an Old Manse*—the book that would be a touchstone in Melville's life.[5] The story also satirizes Hawthorne in the ways he resembles Thoreau. Like Thoreau, Hawthorne speaks about man's moral character in terms of spirit, but he is better known for stories of houses haunted by spirits. There is, for example, the haunted upper chamber of "Custom-House." A spirit dwells in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), too. And, of course, there is his sketch of "The Old Manse," Hawthorne's account of life amongst the Transcendentalists. It was during that time, he would recall, "talking with Thoreau about pine-trees" while visiting his friend at Walden Pond

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[4] Indeed, the story's recent assessment by Maurice S. Lee is a testament to the philosophical complexity of what is seemingly a silly ghost story. See Maurice S. Lee, "Science, Philosophy, and Aesthetics in 'The Apple-Tree Table'" (2017).

[5] Biographical studies of the relationship between Hawthorne and Thoreau include Frank Davidson, "Thoreau's Contribution to Hawthorne's *Mosses*" (1954), and Buford Jones, "*'The Hall of Fantasy' and the Early Hawthorne-Thoreau Relationship*" (1968).

(1:25). This friendship continued after the Hawthornes returned to Concord in 1852 to live in the former home of the Alcotts. It was at "the Wayside" where Hawthorne wrote his unfinished romance about "the elixir of life," inspired by a story he had heard from Thoreau about his eighteenth-century "predecessor" in the home, a "man who was resolved never to die" (13:499)[6] The "hermit-like scholar with Indian blood in his veins" who haunted Hawthorne's Wayside sounds a great deal like his Concord neighbor who would also be the inspiration for the title character of *The Marble Faun* (1860, 13:6).[7] Considering how much attention Hawthorne gave Thoreau over the years, one wonders if Melville felt a bit jealous. Or perhaps Melville feared that his friend might become a Transcendentalist and could use a "spiritual lesson" of his own?

Beneath the surface of Melville's domestic comedy looms a tragic consciousness—the existential pain that consumed Melville in the 1850s. Hawthorne knew this better than anyone. He noted Melville's serious tone when he confided in him on a Southport beach on November 20, 1856: "Melville, as he always does, began to reason of Providence and futurity, and of everything that lies beyond human ken, and informed me that he had 'pretty much made up his mind to be annihilated'; but still he does not seem to rest in that anticipation; and, I think, will never rest until he gets hold of a definite belief" (Melville, *Journals* 628). Melville's preoccupation with resurrection during the 1850s confirms Hawthorne's observation that his friend could not be content to dwell in cosmic ambiguity as well as he.[8]

An insistence on the immortal human spirit, as a form of supernatural agency that persists beyond death and can communicate with the living, is to Melville a naïve presumption. And who

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[6] For a reading of the relationship Hawthorne has to his house, see Alex Shakespeare, "Reading Hawthorne's 'Failure' at The Wayside: The Uncanny Architecture of Septimius Felton" (2009).

[7] See Laura Dassow Walls, *Henry David Thoreau: A Life* (2017), 462–63.

[8] For another discussion of this preoccupation with immortality, see Gordon V. Boudreau, "Herman Melville, Immortality, St. Paul, and Resurrection: From 'Rose-Bud' to 'Billy Budd'" (2013).

should know this better, Melville seems to ask, than Nathaniel Hawthorne, the writer of dark gothic romances so adept at using historical irony to undercut allegory in his own tales, and the moral historian of New England who had replaced Washington Irving as Melville's literary hero.[9] Cheerful allegories about spiritual rebirth are cut down by gothic parody, nothing ambiguous about it. Just as Hawthorne's "The Old Manse" and Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" use the postmillennial spiritualist culture of New England for their subtext, "The Apple-Tree Table" is a cipher for Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and a satire of Transcendentalist spirit—or spiritualism as it appears in 1856. Thus in "The Apple-Tree Table," we find Melville's interpretation of a Sleepy Hollow in Concord a story that is part Irvingesque gothic parody, part twice-told tale about an obsession with things "spiritual."

Before it was the site of the town cemetery, the Sleepy Hollow area of Concord had been known by that name since at least the mid-1830s.[10] It had been a haunt for many of the town's citizens, including its literary luminaries. Nathaniel Hawthorne described it in his journal for July 27th, 1844, as "a shallow space scooped out among the woods, which surround it on all sides, it being pretty nearly circular, or oval, and two or three hundred yards—perhaps four or five hundred—in diameter," half filled with "Indian corn," and a pathway where "sunshine glimmers through shadow, and shadow effaces sunshine, imaging that pleasant mood of mind where gaiety and pensiveness intermingle" (8:245). Sleepy Hollow was the place where Hawthorne was at his

[9] For an magisterial account of Hawthorne's style in the early tales, see Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (1984).

[10] According to the autobiography of John Shepard Keyes, the Sleepy Hollow area of Concord was "just beginning to have that name" (39) about the time of Concord's bicentennial in 1835, when it was the property of Deacon Reuben Brown. If Keyes is correct, then the place got its name after the publication of *The Sketch Book* and may be credited to Irving who first mentions the village in *A History of New-York* (1809).

most Transcendental, however little that was.[11] Years later, Emerson, in that same shady spot just north of town, would speak of immortality and the future beauty of a "grove of trees" (*Later Lectures* 2:32). "When these acorns, that are falling at our feet, are oaks over-shadowing our children in a remote century," Emerson said, "this mute green bank will be full of history: the good, the wise and great will have left their names and virtues on the trees" (*Later Lectures* 2:33).[12]

Henry David Thoreau, who appropriately enough had helped construct Sleepy Hollow's ornamental pond, was also known to make an occasional excursion through the sylvan sanctuary. While he would later enjoy sauntering about the place to admire its red oaks in October, Thoreau skipped the September dedication ceremony, leaving town that day to visit his friend Daniel Ricketson in New Bedford. All the "committee-works and gregariousness" over the new cemetery was too much for him. And although in his journal he promises to "buy no lot in the cemetery which my townsmen have just *consecrated* with a poem and an auction," Thoreau would eventually be laid to rest in the family plot on the famous "Authors Ridge" section of Sleepy Hollow (*Correspondence* 2:163, 162).[13]

By 1855 the old-fashioned idea of a graveyard as a place where the bodies of the deceased remained until the Day of Judgment, had ceded to a more romantic vision of an

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[11] According to Leo Marx, Hawthorne's description of Sleepy Hollow is "reminiscent of the painstaking literary exercises of his neighbor, Henry Thoreau" (16).

[12] The ceremony included an original ode by F. B. Sanborn and the poem "Sleepy Hollow" by Ellery Channing, both of which were included in Emerson's *Parnassus* (1875). F. B. Sanborn recollects the event in "The Sleepy Hollow Cemetery—Old Graves," first published in the *Concord Minute Man*, November 24, 1915, and reprinted in *Sixty Years of Concord* (1987), 14–15.

[13] Thoreau did not buy a lot in the new cemetery and was buried at Concord's New Hill burial ground. According to Walter Harding, Thoreau's family reinterred his body at "Authors Ridge" some ten years later. Harding also says that Thoreau was responsible for surveying and excavating the site of the pond at Concord's new cemetery (474, 358).

arboretum where trees would stand as living metaphors of eternal life.[14] Such a sacred place Emerson had envisioned in his unpublished "Woods: A Prose Sonnet": "Ever the needles of the pine grow & fall, the acorns on the oak, the maples redden in autumn, & all times of the year the ground pine & the pyrola bud & root under foot. What is called fortune & what is called Time by men—ye know them not. Men have not language to describe one moment of your eternal life" (*Collected Poems and Translations* 366). With the help of landscape architects Robert Morris Copeland and Horace William Shaler Cleveland, Emerson, as chair of the cemetery committee, and the other committee members made their vision of a sacred wood a reality.[15]

The people of Concord made for themselves a fitting emblem of the afterlife in their new arboretum-style cemetery—an eternal "life in the woods," you might say. But the name? Emerson provides the best account, explaining simply that "this spot for twenty years has borne the name of Sleepy Hollow," and that "in all the multitudes of woodlands and hillsides," he had "not known one so fitly named" (33). Sleepy Hollow is an appropriate name for an American rural cemetery when one considers how Washington Irving promoted English cemeteries. In his sketch of "Rural Funerals," Irving reasons that "The natural effect of sorrow over the dead is to refine and elevate the mind," as evidenced in "the purity of sentiment and the unaffected elegance of thought" in funeral rituals which include "sweet-scented evergreens and flowers." Irving adds that "The intention seems to have been to soften the horrors of the tomb, to beguile the mind from brooding over the disgraces of perishing mortality, and to associate the memory of the deceased with the most delicate and beautiful objects in nature" (1:257). Irving imports a

[14] For an account of this trend in American history, see David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (1991).

[15] Daniel Joseph Nadenicek (1993) elaborates on Emerson's involvement with the design of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery.

romantic English sentiment for melancholy that would be embraced by Americans who yearned for a sense of past rooted in place, and whose increasingly liberal view idealized death and immortality.

Then again, Sleepy Hollow was the name of the place where Ichabod Crane was reading Cotton Mather when he hears the legend of a resurrected headless horseman and lets his post-Puritan supernaturalism get the best of him. Yet for Concord's citizens, Sleepy Hollow was synonymous with their beloved trees, symbols of life and oracles of their new cemetery. In fact, on the anniversary of the Battles of Concord and Lexington, April 19, 1856, a "tree bee" was held during which one hundred trees were planted in the cemetery by town citizens, "each one of whom thus brought his own memorial."[16] What was once a place where wood was harvested for fuel and lumber became one where trees transcended their material value to be admired for their newer spiritual value. And to have such an event take place on what would become known as Patriot's Day—Concord and Lexington's sacred holiday—connected the premillennialist, late eighteenth-century apocalyptic rhetoric of the Revolution to the millennial movements that characterized religious liberalism in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

The idea of a "Sleepy Hollow" in Concord is taken to its logical and literal conclusion, satirizing the Transcendentalist idea of spirit in gothic parody. As a form, the gothic parody emerged from the Enlightenment, disenchanting beliefs in the supernatural by a "dismantling of the oracles."[17] In this case, the oracles are trees—those that grow in Concord's arboretum cemetery as symbols of the spirit. Yet those same trees are dismantled to make all kinds of homes and furnishings, including bug-ticking tables. All this is to say that the name "Sleepy

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[16] *Reports of the Selectmen and Other Officers, of the Town of Concord, from March 2, 1857 to March 1, 1858* (1858), 16–17; George Bradford Bartlett, *The Concord Guide Book* (1880), 18.

[17] Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (2000), 137.

Hollow" evokes a gothic literary tradition that is ironically out of place in proud Concord, birthplace of the Revolution and the home of its own great writers who were obsessed with the spirit. The recent transformation of this woodlot into a garden cemetery was just too tempting a target for Melville to pass up.[18]

The satire of "The Apple-Tree Table" encompasses a wide range of subjects—supernaturalism, rationalism, sensationalism, empiricism, Puritanism, millennialism, Transcendentalism, and most of all spiritualism, which saw a popular resurgence in the mid-nineteenth century. As a form of communication with the deceased, it most infamously manifested itself between the years 1848 and 1853 in the mediumship of the Fox sisters of New York.[19] It also attracted the attention—or made contact with—some well-known Transcendentalists.[20] At an 1850 seance held by the "Rochester ladies," one attended by a number of American literary celebrities including James Fenimore Cooper and William Cullen Bryant, the former Brook Farmer George Ripley reported that Henry T. Tuckerman allegedly contacted the departed spirit of the Transcendentalists' favorite Unitarian minister, William

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[18] There is no outside evidence to suggest that Melville was aware of Concord's new cemetery; however, the Sleepy Hollow dedication ceremony took place just a few weeks before December 1855 when Melville asked *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* about the status of "The Apple-Tree Table" which he had sent them "some time ago." The manuscript was subsequently returned to Melville. He then sent it to *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, which eventually published it anonymously in the May 1856 edition. See Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography* (2002), 2:271.

[19] In 1848, the two younger Fox sisters, with the assistance of the third, and eldest sister, were able to convince many people that they could communicate with the dead. By 1853, their "psychomancy" was debunked and their "spirit-rappings and table tippings" exposed by Dr. Charles Grafton Page, a former client who had attended many of the Foxes' séances. See his *Psychomancy: Spirit-Rappings and Table-Tippings Exposed* (1853). For a more complete account of the Fox sisters, see Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (2001) and Ernest Isaacs, "The Fox Sisters and American Spiritualism," in *The Occult in America: New Historical Perspectives* (1983). Examples of more recent scholarship on spiritualism include: Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth-century American Literature* (2007); Cathy Gutierrez, *Plato's Ghost: Spiritualism in the American Renaissance* (2009).

[20] Albert J. von Frank and Phyllis Cole discuss "the permeability of Transcendental and Spiritualist conviction and practice" in the context of Margaret Fuller's afterlife as a subject of spirit communication.

Ellery Channing. In 1852, an associate of the Fox Sisters, Isaac Post, claimed to have contacted the recently deceased Margaret Fuller.[21] And it was during the spirit-rapping heyday that Elizabeth Palmer Peabody once recommended that her niece Una Hawthorne pursue a career as a medium—an idea that her father strongly opposed.[22] By the mid-1850s, spiritualism had become a liberal religious movement. A petition was even presented to Congress in 1854 for the "appointment of a scientific commission" to study the phenomena of spirits and fund research into telegraph-like technology that would allow communication with the spirit world.[23] This "memorial" contained almost 12,000 signatures, including forty-three from Concord. Nevertheless, the narrator of "The Apple-Tree Table" assures the reader that the subject of his tale is, "an incident, be it remembered, which, like every other in this narration, happened long before the time of the 'Fox Girls'" (467); it is not simply satire of spiritualism or spirit rapping.

In the story, the narrator and his family become obsessed with the possibility of spirits inhabiting an antique table; yet for all the talk of spirits, the story is not so much a parody of the spiritualism trend as it is about how liberal religion conceives of an afterlife as immaterial spirit. As its subtitle suggests, the story is primarily concerned with the attachment of said table to ideas about spirit, that is "manifestations" of a spiritual or non-material essence in the physical world. The word "manifestations" was often associated with the phenomena, as it appears in the title of Dr. Robert Hare's 1855 study on the phenomenon, *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations*. But what was sometimes distinguished as "spiritism" was the cultural

[21] George Ripley, "An Evening with 'The Spirits'," *New York Tribune*, June 8, 1850, 4. Isaac Post, *Voices from the Spirit World: Being Communications from Many Spirits, by the Hand of Isaac Post, Medium* (1852), 210–11.

[22] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody to Sophia Peabody Hawthorne, March 23, 1851, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library, New York, New York.

[23] Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism* (1899), 130. My thanks to Robert Gross for bringing this to my attention.

manifestation of a philosophical spiritualism that conceives of a spiritual order in the universe. Earlier in the century, Unitarian minister James Walker preached a series of sermons on the evidences of a "spiritual world."[24] Two years later we find Emerson, who dismissed spiritualists and embraced a similar metaphysics in his 1836 *Nature* upon a theory that "Nature is the symbol of spirit" (*CW* 1:17). Arguably influenced by the same Neoplatonic and Swedenborgian ideas about the existence of an immaterial world of spirit, Transcendentalism was one of the ways that this more abstract cosmology of spiritualism manifested itself. When the spiritualist craze was at its zenith, William Henry Channing published *The Spirit of the Age* (1849–1850) catering to a readership which shared affinity for both Transcendentalist and spiritualist subjects. In addition, the short-lived periodical endorsed Fourierist millennialism and a vitalist philosophy, describing itself as a "medium for life" in the present. According to Howard Kerr, "Melville ingeniously juxtaposed several current responses to spiritualism"; to wit, "The faith of respectable and intelligent people in spirit communication, the fear of others that it was satanic in origin, and the suspicion of people like [George Templeton] Strong that it was a new form of old superstition—formed the immediate topical background of 'The Apple-Tree Table'" (44-45).

The kind of spirit Melville concerns himself with most is that which he associates with the Transcendentalism of Henry David Thoreau although Thoreau was no spiritualist. In a letter dated July 13, 1852 to his sister, Sophia, he wrote: "Concord is just as idiotic as ever in relation to the spirits and their knockings." "If I could be brought to believe in the things which they believe," Thoreau says, "I should make haste to get rid of my certificate of stock in this and in the next world's enterprises, and buy a share in the first Immediate Annihilation Company that

[24] Daniel Walker Howe notes that "Walker's address has sometimes been considered a proto-Transcendentalist utterance, but it is basically an inspired elaboration of (Scottish Common Sense philosopher Thomas) Reid" (*Unitarian Conscience* 99). It is ironic that the same Common Sense philosophy that influenced the spiritualism of Harvard moral philosophy also inspired parodies of gothic literature.

offered." Spiritualism did not interest Thoreau in the least. He finds more inspiration in life than in death: "Consider the dawn and the sunrise; —the rainbow and the evening,—the words of Christ and the aspirations of all the saints! Hear music! see, smell, taste, feel,—anything,—and then hear these idiots, inspired by the cracking of a restless board, humbly asking, 'Please, Spirit, if you cannot answer by knocks, answer by tips of the table.' !!!!!!" (*Correspondence* 2:113).

Despite his opposition to a spiritualism that was, to some extent, popular in his hometown, Thoreau describes the apple-tree table incident as a kind of rebirth of one's consciousness, professing his "faith" in a rhetorical crescendo that emerges from that negative capability which insists life goes on despite the facts of the physical, material world. While, according to Gavin Jones, such "contradictions and inconsistencies of *Walden* can be read as correlatives of Thoreau's negative capability, as effects of his moody revision of the manuscript, as part of the deconstructive quality of the text, or as signs of Thoreau's ideological confusions," there is still a "definite pattern" to be explored in its paradoxical constructions (67).

Thoreau thus challenges his reader by asking "who does not feel" this way, who is not so inspired by natural phenomena that seem to confirm the truth of the soul? It is Melville who responds to the moral sentiment of Thoreau's interpretation of the apple-tree table fable by way of a naïvely optimistic question asked by his narrator's young daughter: "For if, after one hundred and seventy years' entombment, a mere insect comes forth at last into light, itself an effulgence, shall there be no glorified resurrection for the spirit of man?" (475). While most readers of American literature will recognize the not-so-subtle allusion to *Walden*, the distinction Melville makes introduces to the apple-tree table legend the word "spirit." By adding spirit to the legend, Melville makes this satire less an ironic counterstatement to Thoreau himself and directs

it more generally to his fellow Transcendentalists and other mystics who would, in a sentimental way, look for confirmation of a life beyond the physical world.

Not unlike a nineteenth-century version of Sir Thomas Browne, who seeks to correct vulgar and common errors, so here Melville questions the belief in a spiritual, non-material soul. To be sure, the nature of the soul is a question that had preoccupied the moral philosophy and theology in New England for centuries. A previous generation of Harvard moralists had read the work of Scottish Common Sense philosopher Dugald Stewart who, in his *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (1793), questions whether man's "future state" depends upon the "soul's immateriality" (209). Stewart equates the soul with mind and concedes that not enough about it had been discovered to know whether it exists as separate from the body or was known if death destroys it, though to him, mind does appear to be immaterial. Compare this Enlightenment view to an 1834 Unitarian sermon by William Ellery Channing. In speaking of *The Future Life*, Channing claims "We have more evidence that we have souls or spirits, than that we have bodies." He promises that "Reason is not left to struggle alone with the horrors of the tomb," and that "This skepticism as to things spiritual and celestial, is as irrational and unphilosophical as it is degrading." Finding assurance in Christ's resurrection is not just good faith, says Channing, but also a source of earthly happiness (*Works* 4:218, 219). Dawn Coleman has recently shown that Channing's *Works* provide a "rich, provocative potential source for Melville," who "engaged with Unitarianism not only experimentally, but also intellectually" (131, 130). In so doing, Coleman has given scholars a new way of understanding Melville's relationship with Unitarianism—one that appears less antagonistic and more sympathetic. Channing's views about the "spiritual world" were of particular interest to the Melvilles, especially Herman's wife Elizabeth, who criticized Channing's theories as "Vain vain speculations!" Elizabeth's husband,

who recorded his commentary on Channing's "Evidences of Revealed Religion," may have sympathized with her dissenting opinions.[25]

Thoreau's idea of spirit was somewhat different; it was not simply analogous to the soul but instead influenced by a new generation of Harvard professors like Jacob Bigelow, Arnold Guyot, and Edward Tuckerman who speculated about life as a force which circulates within animate and inanimate matter, vegetal and animal. This includes John Ware who (re)wrote the textbook Thoreau used in his natural history course at Harvard. Ware's edition of William Smelie's *Philosophy of Natural Philosophy* contains an introduction written by Ware who theorizes about "natural objects" which are "possessed of life" (2). Trees, for example, have the capacity to reinvigorate tissue that had been dispossessed of life, according to Ware. The object of Thoreau's faith in resurrection, inspired by the story of the apple-tree table, is not so much metaphorical as it is, in the light of vitalist science, a physical phenomenon. Branka Arsić understands this as "a different kind of materialism," a vital materialism in which "Thoreau's notion of life is formulated in complete opposition to idealistic vitalism" (122).[26] This is what Thoreau's contemporaries (including his friend and editor of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, George Curtis) would have associated with pantheism. Melville, however, is more willing to challenge Thoreau on his materialist grounds.

A doctrine of spirit in which the physical, material world is but a mere "effulgence" (475) is a light that is as blinding as it is beautiful according to Melville. As an intuitive faith in immortality expressed in the discourses of Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, and spiritualism, spirit serves, to borrow a term from Lauren Berlant, as a kind of affective attachment. According

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[25] Herman and Elizabeth Melville, "Herman and Elizabeth Melville's Marginalia in *The Works of William E. Channing*," *Melville's Marginalia Online*.

[26] Arsić places Thoreau's vitalism in the context of Harvard natural philosophy in the 1830s and 1840s (117-42).

to Berlant, these kinds of impossibly optimistic attachments are necessarily cruel; that one's sense of intuition is "a mode of lived immanence, one that grows from a perception about the reasons people are not Bartleby, do not prefer to interfere with varieties of immiseration, but choose to ride the wave of the system of attachment that they are used to, to syncopate with it, or to be held in a relation of reciprocity, reconciliation, or resignation that does not mean defeat by it" (28). The key word here is "immanence," a belief in the divine in the mundane, or the spiritual in the material. The affective attachment to the idea of spirit enables those without recourse to an orthodox religious doctrine a way to express their optimism and whose moral sentiment rejects any other, pessimistic possibilities. For these same reasons Melville's narrator enjoys ice cream outings, diverting games of whist, and even the occasional cup of punch—to pass the time and take the edge off the immiseration that is death-in-life. It is the active denial of the inimical fact of death, like the maddening "Tick! tick!" emanating from the table, that ever threatens to put a damper on living.

While such a feeling for spirit prevails in the optative, transcendental moods of Thoreau's *Walden*, it is also found—albeit much more subdued, more Puritanically gloomy—in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne's three romances, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)*, The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) speak at length about "spirit" and "the spiritual world." But it is in his sketch of "The Old Manse" where Hawthorne evokes spirit in its most gothic sense, reflecting on his residence at the historic Concord abode as a kind of reverie of "glimmering shadows" which acted as a "kind of spiritual medium" for a place "which had not quite the aspect of belonging to the material world" (*Centenary Edition* 10:3). The world of the *Mosses* is, as Michael J. Colacurcio puts it, "the world of Transcendental illusion," and

Hawthorne, finding himself in that sunny world of Concord idealism, cannot help but see not so much spirit as he does its shadow (*Province of Piety* 516).

Like Thoreau, Hawthorne speaks about man's moral character in terms of spirit. Symbolically turning away from the Puritan tradition that had exerted so much influence over him, Hawthorne's "unlettered soul" explores the affective depths of the Concord River and does his very best to embrace his transcendental neighborhood. To be sure, Hawthorne is no Transcendentalist. He colors the world of his friends Emerson and Thoreau in his own gothic mood. "We will not, then, malign our river as gross and impure while it can glorify itself with so adequate a picture of the heaven that broods above it," he says, "or, if we remember its tawny hue and the muddiness of its bed, let it be a symbol that the earthiest human soul has an infinite spiritual capacity and may contain the better world within its depths. But, indeed, the same lesson might be drawn out of any mud-puddle in the streets of a city; and, being taught us everywhere, it must be true" (*Centenary Edition* 10:18, 19). Melville would go on to praise "Hawthorne and His Mosses" by emphasizing Hawthorne's "power of blackness," his negative or opposite view of the world, one not predisposed to indulge the optimistic fantasies of the spiritually inclined (243). It is not, however, pessimism. In the words of Henry James, Hawthorne is "no more a pessimist than an optimist, though he is certainly not much of either," especially in "The Old Manse," where "the cry of metaphysical despair is not even faintly sounded" (59, 103). As we shall see, Melville situates the apple-tree table story in Hawthorne's Old Manse while subjecting it to the common-sense irony of a gothic parody, appealing to a sense of New England's Puritan past that, with a Melvillean materialism, ironically undercuts a faith in a spiritual resurrection and immortality.

Melville knew both sources of the apple-tree table legend. He read about the table in Timothy Dwight's *Travels*, the same Dwight to whom Melville's pseudonymous "Virginian Spending July in Vermont" said "good-bye" in his review of "Hawthorne and His *Mosses*" (240). And he most certainly read—and noted—the account of the table in his copy of *A History of the County of Berkshire* (1829).[27] These original sources for the apple-tree table legend were probably of interest to Melville because of the way these two accounts interpreted natural facts in some version of New England history. Dwight's narrator, in his attempt at a rational explanation for the bugs, falls back on the old typological mode of reading signs of God in the wilderness. These original accounts of the apple-tree table story, which fall within an approximately twenty-year period, are in effect epistemes of an earlier premillennial era and a later postmillennial era. So it is that "The Apple-Tree Table," as a tale in the tradition of the American gothic, considers how the religious and political histories of New England are embedded in the original folktale that, when resurrected by Thoreau, takes on a new life and a new meaning altogether.

In contradistinction to Thoreau's apocalyptic revelation in *Walden*, Melville finds the story of the apple-tree table undermines any such belief in immortality. When Thoreau recycles the tale "of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of an old table of apple-tree wood," the cosmic yankee was looking for Transcendental inspiration in the bug's "beautiful and winged life" (333). Melville satirizes this interpretation of the legend at the end of the story when the enthusiastic sentiment for spirits takes the form of a young girl who goes from being afraid of spirits to celebrating them: "'Spirits! spirits!' she exclaimed, with rapture, 'I still believe in spirits, only now I believe in them with delight, when before I but thought of them with terror.'" What had once been interpreted as just an interesting episode in the natural history of

[27] See Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log* (1951), 1:378.

Massachusetts becomes a symbol of rebirth into life everlasting. And some life that is, Melville would have us think. Where Thoreau is genuinely inspired by the folktale, Melville casts a naively optimistic child in his place, one who so eloquently asks, "shall there be no glorified resurrection for the spirit of man?" Probably not—for despite the "delight" that the little girl feels when "the mere insect comes forth at last into light, itself an effulgence." Melville's narrator quashes this joyous expectation and relays that the bug "did not long enjoy its radiant life; it expired the next day." Then as a reminder of the miraculous rebirth, the girls keep the bug "embalmed in a silver vinaigrette" (475)—making it a cheap decoration for all eternity. This is where Melville's gothic parody of resurrection and immortality reaches its climax. For all its effulgence, the prospect of an afterlife seems rather pointless, or is at best a rather onerous way to go about eternity, by existing first as something material only to have to become an immaterial essence that presumably already existed. To put it another way, Melville tells Thoreau and anyone else who professes a faith in spirit, one can have faith in either resurrection *or* immortality, but not both.

Ultimately it is the optimism inherent in beliefs about spirit, resurrection, and immortality that Melville is intent on deflating in "The Apple-Tree Table." Melville does this by emphasizing the natural history of the apple-tree table—as a material object that once lived— to expose, by way of gothic irony, an inclination toward the supernaturalism expressed by Transcendentalists and spiritualists alike. Furthermore, as represented by young girls, both Transcendentalism and spiritualism were considered by many to be something of interest primarily to women, if not women's movements themselves.

To understand "The Apple-Tree Table" in its entirety, it helps to see how Melville associates Thoreau's version of the apple-tree table legend with the gothic traditions of both

Irving and Hawthorne. Melville offers clues right from the start that suggest he is deliberately satirizing Concord's Sleepy Hollow Cemetery with allusions to the town. The story begins with a curious Ichabod-like narrator, trembling with fear, discovering the antique apple-tree table in the garret of his house. "In order to convey a better idea of it," the narrator says, "some account may as well be given of the place it came from … a very old garret of a very old house in an old-fashioned quarter of one of the oldest towns in America" (p. 465), not unlike the Old Manse. Melville's garret contains furniture and other items like those described in Hawthorne's sketch that suggests it was used to house the Harvard faculty during the siege of Boston, another link to be sure that resonates with the political and religious history of Concord.[28]

To unlock this mysterious garret, the narrator finds "a large and curious key, very old and rusty," he says, in "a corner of our glen-like, old, terraced garden." The "key" is in the description, which is identical to the glen-like terraced garden cemetery surveyed by Thoreau. "Wishing to shed a clearer light through the place," the narrator reveals more about this "haunted ground" in which he encounters "funereal accumulations" of "matted masses of weedy webs, chrysalides and insectivorous eggs" and "scores of small ants and flies" (465–66). Then, out of this bug-infested chamber, like "a rainbowed tunnel clear across the darkness of the garret," illuminating "millions of butterfly moles" and "thousands of insects clustered in a golden mob," the narrator has a revelation:

> At last, with a sudden jerk, I burst open the scuttle. And ah! what a change. As from the gloom of the grave and the companionship of worms, man shall at last

[28] During the British occupation of Boston, nine Concord homes housed the property and the faculty of Harvard College. In this way, "The Apple-Tree Table" makes a subtle reference to its location as does its companion piece, "I and My Chimney," published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, March 1856. This earlier story may also be set in Concord as it alludes to "grape-vines" and "Deacon White," the town's Congregationalist minister from 1784 to 1827. Both stories feature aspects of Melville's own "Arrowhead." They also stylistically enshrine Hawthorne. See John Allison, "Conservative Architecture: Hawthorne in Melville's 'I and My Chimney'" (1996).

> rapturously rise into the living greenness and glory immortal, so, from my cobwebbed old garret, I thrust forth my head into the balmy air, and found myself hailed by the verdant tops of great trees, growing in the little garden below—trees, whose leaves soared above my topmost state. (466)

The narrator describes his ecstasy as a physical, bodily resurrection into "the living greenness and glory immortal" and all because of the inspirational power of trees. As they are for the arboretum cemetery, trees become the most powerful symbols of eternal life. Meanwhile, the entire place is crawling with insects. Unlike the bug at the end of the story, whose beauty is as venerable as that of the trees outside, the lower-life forms within the garret do little to inspire one with a feeling of immanence but instead are reminder of one's creaturely fate.

The contrasting views of nature from this garret are similar to that seen from the garret of "The Old Manse." There, Hawthorne expresses his own reverence for trees. First he pays respect to the "latest inhabitant" of the manse, the late Ezra Ripley, who is imagined to have "paced to and fro along the avenue, attuning his meditations to the sighs and gentle murmurs and deep and solemn peals of the wind among the lofty tops of the trees!" Then, observing the property's orchard, Hawthorne writes, "The trees possess a domestic character; they have lost the wild nature of their forest kindred, and have grown humanized by receiving the care of man as well as by contributing to his wants." He adds that "They offer their fruit to every wayfarer,—apples that are bitter sweet with the moral of Time's vicissitude" (10:4, 12). Trees are valued for their "domestic character" and practical use rather than for any ideal of life they represent; at the same time, the moral to be observed in nature is one of loss and decay.

In this "venerable garret" Hawthorne also mused upon the afterlife, both spiritual and literary. He mentions some friendly "spirits" haunting the place, though he says matter-of-factly

that "houses of any antiquity in New England are so invariably possessed with spirits that the matter seems hardly worth alluding to." Yet if any spirit is haunting Hawthorne in the garret of the Old Manse, it is the spirit of Emerson. Looking through a library old books, pamphlets, and papers, "from the days of the mighty Puritan divines" up until the present day—a pile of "dreary trash," "There appeared no hope of either mounting to the better world on a Gothic staircase of ancient folios or of flying thither on the wings of a modern tract," as Emerson aspired to in *Nature*. Hawthorne tries in vain to find a "living thought" among the them but "all was dead alike." "[T]he works of man's intellect decay like those of his hands," he says. "Thought grows mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation affords no sustenance for the next" (10:18, 17, 20). There is something familiar about the way Hawthorne resists building "sepulchres of the fathers," though retrospective he most certainly is (*CW* 1:7). Rather than allow *Nature* to command the narrative, Hawthorne finds in the history of the parsonage another, alternative narrative to one illuminated by Emerson's optimism, one that sees the truth in nature's shadow. As Larry J. Reynolds points out, "Though Hawthorne re-experienced intimacy with nature in Concord, he struggled to free himself from the Emersonian idealism which imbued and constrained it" ("Hawthorne and Emerson in 'The Old Manse,'" 63).[29]

When Hawthorne discovers the relics of both Puritan and liberal religion discarded in the garret of "The Old Manse," he re-interprets the history of Transcendentalist Concord, giving it his own gothic treatment. But what if among all the "mouldy" books he might have found Thoreau's apple-tree table? This is the question posed by Melville. His fictional answer makes a

[29] Emerson's figurative haunting of Hawthorne is dramatized in an entry from the *American Notebooks.* Hawthorne describes how Emerson intrudes upon him and Margaret Fuller, interrupting their solitude and conversation in, of all places, Sleepy Hollow. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Volume 8, The American Notebooks* (1972), 343.

the same Hawthornean connection between the Transcendentalists and their Puritan forbearers, wherein the naïve spiritual beliefs being satirized neglect the ecclesiastical history of New England and also the glaring facts of natural history that the narrator stumbles over, blinded by his romantic optimism.

“Refreshed by this outlook,” this graveyard-poet-turned-romantic-solitaire, “turned inward to behold the garret, now unwontedly lit up.” What he finds there is something like a museum, littered with “obsolete furniture,” “mildewed old documents,” and scientific instruments. Then, “in the least lighted corner of all,” is the apple-tree table itself. The “satanic-looking little old table” shaped like a “circle and tripod” suggests an association with an alchemist for “it seemed just such a necromantic little old table as might have belonged to Friar Bacon.” The table is also described as “a slab” having a “plain” style on top, sitting on “three crooked legs, terminating in three cloven feet” (465–66). These two different styles—Puritan plain and the demonic—represent the combination of elements in the variety of spirit that had become a part of New England’s literary culture, from Bryant to Longfellow, Emerson and Thoreau, and, yes, even Hawthorne. Melville’s description of the table is also a fitting parody of Thoreau’s version, which itself resembles a kind of necromancy in its conjuring of the possibility for a figurative resurrection and immortality.

In addition to the discovery of the table, Melville’s narrator finds in this garret a “mouldy old book” (466). The author of the book, the reader is told, is Cotton Mather. This allusion to Mather is significant for several reasons, not the least of which is Hawthorne and Thoreau’s shared interest in him, as *The House of the Seven Gables* and *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* both contain references to Mather. There is also Mather’s place in the gothic tradition of American literature as the author of *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693).

Importantly, Mather is the source of Ichabod Crane's superstition in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Irving describes Crane as "a perfect master of Cotton Mather's history of New England witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed" (2:292). As Dorothy Z. Baker explains, "the eerier tales of Cotton Mather are countered and conquered by a gothic account of a purportedly historical event," a la Brom Bones (9).

Mather was also among the old divines represented in the collection of religious works that Hawthorne finds in his Concord garret. Mather preached an orthodox, Calvinist faith with bodily resurrection as the fulfillment of God's glorious and providential work in America. Yet despite the prevailing doctrine, New England gradually rejected the possibility of bodily resurrection and replaced it with a belief in another kind of afterlife. How ironic is it, as Melville would have us think, that the Sleepy Hollow of Concord possesses a similar legend that in effect chases away the orthodoxy of the Mathers and replaces it with a Neoplatonic belief in the immortality of the soul. So it is that with its own Ichabod-like narrator, Melville's story brings together Sleepy Hollow and Concord.

But while most critics may understand the reference to Mather, they have often misunderstood the significance of Melville's pun—that the book is referred to not as the *Magnalia* but "Magnolia" (466, 467).[30] When some of Melville's shorter works were reprinted in 1922, a substantive error in "The Apple-Tree Table" deprived readers of this small but significant pun. The error, later standardized in the Northwestern-Newberry Edition, occurs where "*Magnalia*" is substituted for what is clearly "Magnolia" in the original copy-text, the May 1856 edition of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. The fact that "Magnolia" appears twice would give more credence to the originally published text. William B. Dillingham thinks that

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[30] Cf., Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).

“Magnolia” appears to be, “[the] narrator’s comic mistake rather than a misprint” (352). As Dillingham points out, human error is a recurrent motif in the story. The reference to a tree, meanwhile, is itself part of a running gag.

The printing of “Magnolia” in the original was no mistake. Given that this particular issue of *Putnam’s Monthly* contained another piece about Cotton Mather, the evidence indicates that the editor, George Curtis, ought to have been familiar enough with Mather’s works not to have made such an error in the first place. Curtis was also familiar with Thoreau as well since he was one of the few people who helped Thoreau erect his cabin at Walden Pond. Curtis, by the way, angered his old friend by bowdlerizing his “Excursion to Canada” published in the first three issues of *Putnam’s Monthly* before the series was cut short because of Thoreau’s disagreement over Curtis’s editorial practices.[31] That said, Curtis may have approved Melville poking fun at his old friend.

Nevertheless, it is the narrator of the story then who confuses the name of a book with a tree. The original text, which reads, “Cotton Mather’s ‘Magnolia,’” draws attention to the fact that the “ghostly, dismantled old quarto” on the table was once a living tree itself. For example, family members are tormented by what they believe are spirits found not in the “wainscot” of their home but inside an antique table—one made not of “ordinary mahogany” but of “apple-tree wood” darkened to a shade of “walnut”—which is placed within a “cedar-parlor” after it had been saved from the “chip-bin,” in the “wood-house” (465, 468, 466, 469). With or without the pun, the story repeatedly draws attention to the fact that living trees become, in death, the substance of books and tables. And in this story, book and table are a matching set, not for their associations with the supernatural so much as for their natural origins.

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[31] This incident is discussed in Walls, *Thoreau: A Life*, 188, 302.

That Mather's *Magnalia* gets mistakenly referred to as a "Magnolia" is no small pun. The presence of the *Magnalia* imbues the story with the frightening influence of Puritan supernaturalism. That the word is actually "Magnolia" suggests that the citizens of Concord prefer the romantic veneration of trees as comically portrayed in the beginning of the story over "mouldy," old history books. And yet those "Magnolias" persist as specters haunting their romantic imaginations. Melville recognizes this relationship, one which writers such as Thoreau and Hawthorne had with the Puritan tradition of New England. As Sacvan Bercovitch notes, Thoreau "bypassed the natural supernaturalism of his European contemporaries for that of his Puritan New England predecessors (including Cotton Mather)" (162). Hawthorne, meanwhile, made a career for himself as the writer of tales that complicate the otherwise allegorical history of Puritan New England. So here is the student teaching the master and his favorite Transcendentalist how it is done.

It makes sense, insofar as Melville parodies Thoreau, to start his story with tree worship. While Thoreau's more intense tree veneration in "Chesuncook" would come later, "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods," which had already been serialized in *Sartain's Union Magazine* in 1848, professes Thoreau's characteristic admiration for trees. Melville's comic observation is that Thoreau, who sees living trees as symbols of eternal life, contradicts himself by making symbols out of the living insects that emerge out of dead pieces of wood. Melville was interested in the economy of trees. In "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," for example, Graham Thompson argues that facts concerning the products of trees such as paper "collectively shape the interplay between the story's imaginative and material domains to the extent that paper

becomes the story's subject" (46).[32] So too in "The Apple-Tree Table," the natural history of wood has a story to tell.

The mystery that baffles everyone in "The Apple-Tree Table" is how a bug can lay dormant and become reanimated after well over one hundred and fifty years.[33] At least one member of the family thinks it ought to be taken as a symbol of immortality, but that is not how the story of the table is understood by the narrator. Apocalyptic images and symbols, such as "a general's marquee" and a "Gothic pulpit-stairway" in the garret point toward the mythical and mystical associations made in the apple-tree table legend's earliest incarnations just after the Revolutionary War (465). Melville hints that the shifting significance of the apple-tree over several generations reflects the shift between the premillennialism of the orthodox theocracy in provincial New England and the postmillennialism of the liberal Christianity in the early-nineteenth century. So, too, is there a shift at this time from the belief in a bodily resurrection and some spiritual transfiguration at death. Yet the meaning in these symbols is solely satirical, not eschatological for Melville who is saying that this sort of typological reading of human history in the world is a misunderstanding of the significance of the natural world.[34]

If by the end of *Walden* Thoreau forgets that trees, like the ones used to make apple-tree tables, are living things themselves and not just metaphors, "The Apple-Tree Table" points out

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[32] Thompson's paratextual analysis of "The Apple-Tree Table" and an article on "Spiritual Materialism" in the earlier August 1854 issue of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* is also worth noting (148–55).

[33] The way that mystery is handled, parodically, between Thoreau and Melville is consistent with David S. Reynolds's argument that, "In the literary text, ambiguity or mystery itself becomes a central issue consciously treated. In Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, mystery forms the basis of an exultant individualism and an affirmation of stylistic potency; in Melville, Hawthorne, and Dickinson this potency coexists with more problematic ponderings of ambiguity" (*Beneath the American Renaissance*, 9).

[34] In "The Typological Design of 'The Apple-Tree Table,'" Jonathan A. Cook sketches out Melville's typology.

the irony of this environmental blindness by way of a comic overstatement of the many types of wood that construct the dwelling place of its fictional family. Likewise, it is an emphasis on the natural history of household objects and a relentless shouting about "Spirits! spirits!" that "The Apple-Tree Table" announces its satirical subject, the subtext for which is a historically significant place where, in the shade of an arboretum, life is ironically sentimentalized under the name of a famous gothic parody.

We see, for example, how Melville's story frames itself as a version of Sleepy Hollow in Concord when the narrator recounts his first "incident" with the table one December evening. Like Ichabod Crane in Irving's tale, the writings of Mather had got the best of him:

> The truth was that, though, in my previous night-readings, Cotton Mather had but amused me, upon this particular night he terrified me. A thousand times I had laughed at such stories. Old wives' fables, I thought, however entertaining. But now, how different. They began to put on the aspect of reality. Now, for the first time it struck me that this was no romantic Mrs. Radcliffe who had written the "Magnolia," but a practical, hardworking, earnest, upright man, a learned doctor, too, as well as a good Christian and orthodox clergyman. What possible motive could such a man have to deceive? His style had all the plainness and unpoetic boldness of truth. In the most straightforward way, he laid before me detailed accounts of New England witchcraft, each important item corroborated by respectable townsfolk, and of which not a few of the most surprising he himself had been eyewitness. Cotton Mather testified whereof he had seen. But, is it possible, I asked myself. Then I remembered that Dr. Johnson, the matter-of-fact compiler of a dictionary, had been a believer in ghosts, besides many other sound, worthy men. (467)

Mather, and not Radcliffe, is the source of New England's gothic imagination. Because he is not "romantic" but speaks with "the plainness and unpoetic boldness of truth" (467), he is to be considered more of an authority on the subject of the supernatural rather than an Old World gothicist. Johnson, on the other hand, was much more open to the possibility of ghosts.[35]

Melville's narrator conflates two accounts of the supernatural, mistaking Mather's reports of witchcraft as confirmation of his belief in the afterlife. When he first begins to hear the "tick! tick!" in the table, he asks himself: "Could Cotton Mather speak true? Were there spirits? And would spirits haunt a tea-table? Would the Evil One dare show his cloven foot in the bosom of an innocent family?" For Mather, spirit is synonymous with the vital essence of a living person, a life breathed into a person by the divine Holy Spirit. The more accurate word here should be "specter," which denotes an evil creation of devilish deception. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, it was much more fashionable to believe in the friendly-ghost variety of spirits than in demonic entities. Nevertheless, like the troubled narrator who "oscillated between [Johnson's] Democritus and Cotton Mather" (470, 473), Melville observes the same kind of oscillation between Transcendentalism and spiritualism regarding spiritual beliefs.

The story, it should be noted, is not without a self-conscious admission of its own derivation of gothic convention. Allusions to Edgar Allen Poe haunt the house as a specter of both the gothic and critical traditions and indicate his opinions about Hawthorne. The ticking of the bug torments the story's protagonist and evokes Poe's "Tell-tale Heart," mocking the historical imagination of Hawthorne in his "Old Manse." Poe never quite understood Hawthorne

[35] Mather's concern with the Salem Witch Trials and Johnson's, with the Cock Lane Ghost, illustrate their common concern for the supernatural. On February 1, 1762, Johnson attended a séance to investigate claims of a spirit haunting a home on Cock Lane in London. Bringing up Johnson in the same context as Mather, Melville is alluding to a contemporary study of the supernatural by Charles Wyllys Elliott, who had made the same connections in his book *Mysteries, or, Glimpses of the Supernatural: Containing Accounts of the Salem Witchcraft, the Cock-Lane Ghost, the Rochester Rappings, the Stratford Mysteries, Oracles, Astrology, Dreams, Demons, Ghosts, Spectres, &c., &c*. (1852). The Cock-Lane Ghost is also mentioned in *Moby-Dick* (308).

and his penchant for history though he did recognize his allegorical style. “One thing is clear,” he says in his review of Hawthorne, “that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction.” This is precisely the method of Hawthorne’s style and what Melville found so powerful. Poe also felt that Hawthorne was spending too much time among the Transcendentalists. “Indeed,” he says, “*his* spirit of ‘metaphor run-mad’ is clearly imbibed from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath,” and recommending that he “come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of ‘The Dial.’”[36] Melville will ultimately make a clear distinction between Hawthorne and the rest of Concord, by using his gothic allegorical style to overturn the Transcendentalist metaphor of spirit.

When the narrator hears the sounds of a “spirit,” like the ticking of his heart, beneath the surface of a wooden table, he “gently oscillated between” the rational mind of Democritus and the supernatural imagination of Mather. This process creates a good deal of comic suffering on the part of the narrator, who resolves to “put Cotton Mather permanently aside,” and declare himself a “Democritus forever” (473, 468, 474). After the table has been domesticated—that is, varnished and repurposed as both a “tea table” and a game table for the family—the narrator plays a few rubbers of whist with his family before once again considering the question about the existence of spirits:

> To evince my hardihood the more signally, when tea was dismissed, and the three rubbers of whist had been played, and no ticking had been heard—which the more encouraged me—I took my pipe and, saying that bedtime had arrived for the rest, drew my chair towards the fire, and, removing my slippers, placed my feet on the

[36] Edgar Allan Poe, “Tale-Writing: A Review,” *Godey's Lady's Book*, November 1847 in “Hawthorne,” *Poe: Essays and Reviews* (1984), 582, 588.

fender, looking as calm and composed as old Democritus in the tombs of Abdera, when one midnight the mischievous little boys of the town tried to frighten that sturdy philosopher with spurious ghosts (470).

On this night the first bug emerges from the table. It is no longer a matter of spirits for the narrator. It becomes instead a question about the possibilities for life emerging from death. "Could I believe my senses?" he asks, "A live bug come out of a dead table?" The bug, looking "like a fiery opal," is nothing short of a marvel, albeit a natural one (471, 474). "Supernatural coruscation as it appeared," he says, "I strove to look at the strange object in a purely scientific way." To prove this creature is a natural phenomenon, the narrator places the bug under a tumbler to show his family. But then come morning, Biddy the maid tosses the bug into the fire. The lack of physical evidence frustrates the narrator, but before his rational explanation can quell the cries of his daughters, the ticking resumes and his children once again refer to it as the work of "Spirits! spirits!" Meanwhile, the narrator becomes concerned about his wife's lack of superstition, eagerly "expecting some mystical proposition" out of her that never comes. Instead, the skeptical wife has poor Biddy rub some of the "celebrated roach powder" on the table. Despite knowing the truth about the source of the ticking, the narrator holds onto the idea that a spirit could be in the table (471, 472).

What is of importance to the narrator is a supernatural belief that originates from an idea about nature. A naturalist, not a spiritualist, is the first to comment on the significance of the apple-tree table incident in the story, and the empirical observations of a naturalist prompt a second spiritual interpretation. Julia, the daughter with a spiritualist inclination, recommends the services of "Madam Pazzi, the conjuress," but the older generation instead calls upon "Professor Johnson, the naturalist" for his expert opinion on the natural facts of the case. "The learned

professor looked hard at the table" and offered an explanation not much different from the rational observations in the earliest sources of the legend. Then, when the parents ask their daughter, "where are your spirits?" the professor remarks, "with a sneer," "Why, now, she did not really associate this purely natural phenomenon with any crude spiritual hypothesis did she?" Unaffected by the skeptical, perhaps cynical view of the professor, the daughter replies, "say what you will, if this beauteous creature be not a spirit, it yet teaches a spiritual lesson." The lesson here, in Melville's presentation, is one of cosmic irony, for the "beauteous creature" (474–75) hardly survives a day into immortality.

The comment that "The Apple-Tree Table" makes on the "spiritual hypothesis" is more sentimental than scientific or even religious for that matter. When the little girl concludes by saying, "I still believe in spirits, only now I believe in them with delight, when before I but thought of them with terror" (475), her concept of spirit undergoes a change similar to that of New England supernaturalism from Mather to Melville. During that 150-year history, the bug-spirit of the apple-tree table is estimated, albeit erroneously, to have lived half its life, from the end of the seventeenth century to the American Revolution, in a living tree; and the second half of its life, inside a dead piece of wood crafted into a table. By the calculation of the "eminent naturalist" the first eighty years and the second span of ninety years adds up to—150 years? If even the rational mind of an eminent naturalist can have its weaknesses (i.e., math), then maybe one should approach the spiritual hypothesis with an even greater skepticism. Either way, Melville shows more sympathy for the naivety of the little girl than he does the arrogance of the scientist. In his analysis of *Clarel* (1876), Andrew Delbanco sums up Melville's problem with science: "Science, so full of promise for its insights into the processes of nature, could [in

Melville's view] do nothing to satisfy what William James would soon call 'the craving of the heart to believe that behind nature there is a spirit whose expression nature is" (282).[37]

Finally, Melville brings his gothic parody back to its historical moment, what has made garden cemeteries possible. He does this by reconciling the natural history of the apple-tree table with New England's political and religious history, for which the Revolution was nothing short of apocalyptic. The family stays up all night and the clock counts the hours until sunrise. Then, with some "terrific, portentous rapping" (474), the bug finally makes its miraculous revelation. Stunning the family, the narrator imagines an even more absurd appearance for it seems to defy any further typological interpretation. That is to say, before the bug's appearance, it portends the apocalypse. Afterward, life goes on as much as it did before the terror of the ticking. That the bug is imagined holding a "Chaldee manuscript" suggests that Melville is playing a joke on the reader who took his religious references too seriously. There is also the epistemic tension between an age that would have recognized in the "Tick! tick!" of the bug a certain mechanistic, clock-like lifeform, and another that insists on the vital force of disembodied "Spirits! spirits!"[38]

The irony that Melville finds in the metaphorical interpretation of the second apple-tree table event is the same irony he sees in the belief of a so-called spiritual afterlife which, like the apple-tree table itself, becomes a romantic fiction representing eternal life after death. That the family is left only with an ornament and a monument of the deceased speaks to Melville's comment on the very heart of the rural cemetery movement in America. This cultural phenomenon was made possible by the same sentimentalized view of the afterlife that is satirized

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[37] William James quoted in Delbanco, cited as "The Will to Believe" (1896), in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1956), 40.

[38] In an earlier, Enlightenment episteme, the watchmaker analogy was the paradigm for explaining the mysteries of creation, whereas the later paradigm seems to be one of "spirits." See William Paley's *Natural Theology; Or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1802).

here: a shift in New England's eschatological vision in the gradual abandonment of the doctrine of bodily resurrection in favor of the gradual acceptance of a kind of transfiguration of one's soul upon death. Conclusive evidence of the afterlife nowhere to be found, the family settles for mere symbols.

Melville's mockery would do nothing to dissuade Thoreau. His second essay about the Maine woods, published in the July 1858 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, reaffirms Thoreau's vitalist faith:

> Strange that so few ever come to the woods to see how the pine lives and grows and spires, lifting its evergreen arms to the light,—to see its perfect success; but most are content to behold it in the shape of many broad boards brought to market, and deem that its true success. But the pine is no more lumber than man is, and to be made into boards and houses is no more its true and highest use than the truest use of a man is to be cut down and made into manure. There is a higher law affecting our relation to pines as well as to men." (*MW* 121).

Adding that, "A pine cut down, a dead pine, is no more a pine than a dead human carcass is a man," Thoreau addresses a certain skeptic—Melville?—when he asks, "Can he who has discovered only some of the values of whalebone and whale oil be said to have discovered the true use of the whale?" "It is the poet," Thoreau declares, "who makes the truest use of the pine,—who does not fondle it with an axe, nor tickle it with a saw, nor stroke it with a plane." In what reads as a direct response to Melville's satire of him, an unapologetic Thoreau contrasts the lumberyard, carpenter's shop, tannery, and other uses of pine with the ability of the poet to see the highest use of the pine: "not its spirit of turpentine" but the "living spirit of the tree." He concludes this passage with an additional sentence that James Russell Lowell infamously cut out

of the “Chesuncook” essay: “It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still” (*MW* 121-22).[39] Thoreau recognizes trees as living things on equal footing with man. To him, they are more than just symbols of immortality but rather possess a “living spirit.”

In the end, “The Apple-Tree Table” would deny no one their sentiments, but natural facts about the soul or the spirit may be too hard to come by, if at all. The insect is, of course, an “effulgence” of life-giving spirit. Melville’s ironic commentary puts forward that in the natural history of an apple-tree table, the former dignity of spiritual man is reduced to that of a bug, a small, unlettered, and unknowing living organism that, truth be told, feasts upon our dead bodies at the table of our graves.

“The Apple-Tree Table” ends with an odd reference, an image of “the two sealing-wax drops designating the exact place of the two holes made by the two bugs, something in the same way in which are marked the spots where the cannon balls struck the Brattle street church” (475). Unlike so many of the monuments Americans erected during the nineteenth century, this one gracing the façade of the Brattle Street Church was a relic of the Revolution, empirical evidence of an almost miraculous event in American history. The reference to the “cannon balls” in the former Manifesto Church, as it was called, the first of Puritan Boston’s liberal churches—the church Melville’s father attended—is a metaphor for the table’s memorialization of the lives of two bugs; however, the statement is factually wrong, as only one cannonball struck the church when the British army occupied Boston. How easily, Melville seems to say, is nature and history interpreted—or misinterpreted—to enable our fictions of life. The confusion of historical

[39] See also Joseph J. Moldenhauer, “Textual Introduction,” *The Maine Woods*, 361–63.

memory in the double image of the cannonball mirrors the confusion in the double image of apple-tree table. Whereas the cannonball might be understood as a pre-millennialist, then postmillennialist symbol of the religious significance of the Revolution, so was the apple-tree table interpreted to have both pre- and postmillennialist meanings. [40]

By showing how the apple-tree table legend is associated with millennialism and revolutionary history, Melville's ironic punchline departs from the common sense of Irving's gothic parody and embraces the twisted allegories of Hawthorne's twice-told tales. Just as *Moby-Dick* was dedicated to the "genius" of Nathaniel Hawthorne, "The Apple-Tree Table" pays homage to Melville's literary hero by complicating New England religious liberalism's moralizing allegory for itself just as Hawthorne did in his early provincial tales (vii). But rather than subject it to an epic, Ahab-like crisis precipitated by an unwilling, fatalistic Calvinism as in *Moby-Dick*, Melville shows more sympathy for "faith in a resurrection and immortality" by exposing the cosmic irony of a postmillennial spiritualism and Transcendentalism that is ultimately, like the image of the Brattle Street Church itself, a manifestation of New England's premillennial Puritan past. And why should not Hawthorne have something to say about Concord building a "Sleepy Hollow Cemetery"? He is, after all, their hometown gothic story teller. Melville thus did him the favor.

The gothic parody of Transcendental spirit in "The Apple-Tree Table," both a literal parody of Irving's gothic parody and a more ironic one of the gothic styles of Concord's Thoreau and Hawthorne, is a riddle suggested by the very idea of a Sleepy Hollow in Concord. Melville would go on to create a similar kind of riddle on a larger scale with the publication of *The Confidence Man* the following year in 1857. He mocks Thoreau again as Egbert, the "practical

[40] John Hays has shown "Melville's appreciation for the process of monumentalization" (195) as well as his association of Irving with literary fame.

disciple" of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Winsome (197). Hawthorne shows up there, too, as Charlie Noble. But the satire of "The Apple-Tree Table" is not one of caricature but of style—the gothic parody, resurrected by Melville to tell a truth obscured by the effulgence of spirit in Concord.

Thoreau's final word on the subject of trees and inspiration is contained in his essay "Autumnal Tints." "A village needs these innocent stimulants of bright and cheering prospects," he says of the bright fall foliage in New England, "to keep off melancholy and superstition."

> Show me two villages, one embowered in trees and blazing with all the glories of October, the other a merely trivial and treeless waste, or with only a single tree or two for suicides, and I shall be sure that in the latter will be found the most starved and bigoted religionists and the most desperate drinkers. Every washtub and milkcan and gravestone will be exposed. The inhabitants will disappear abruptly behind their barns and houses, like desert Arabs amid their rocks, and I shall look to see spears in their hands. They will be ready to accept the most barren and forlorn doctrine,—as that the world is speedily coming to an end, or has already got to it, or that they themselves are turned wrong side outward. They will perchance crack their dry joints at one another and call it a spiritual communication. (*Excursions* 247-48).

The act of memorializing ourselves, if not out of a sacred duty to the departed, is motivated by our collective desire for immortality, a reflection of our hope that our lives be remembered in some beautiful, permanent way. Literature has that power, the power to ensure that the writer lives on. Posthumous literary fame haunts "The Apple-Tree Table" as much as any ticking bug—in "the spirit of Democritus" and the "doleful, ghostly, ghastly Cotton Mather" (473, 467). Melville is of the opinion that if a writer wants to be remembered, they should not

concern themselves so much with the business of cemeteries, which is as effective as turning a dead bug into decorative art. Their spirit will live—not in the metaphor of a stone, a tree, or a cannonball—but in their writing. A writer's style is their spirit; and if one's spirit is not necessarily the same thing as one's soul but rather just a parody of their essence then that may have to do. When "The Apple-Tree Table" was published in May of 1856, Irving was still alive, as were Hawthorne and Thoreau. But they would soon be gone, though not yet forgotten. Posthumous fame gave them all a literary afterlife, as it did for the ironic, gothic spirit of Herman Melville.

APPENDIX

An Annotated List of Published Items Attributed to Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

in the *Boston Observer*, *Christian Register*, and *Western Messenger*

Boston Observer and Religious Intelligencer (1835)

Vol. 1, No. 2 (8 January 1835)

11 Sunday School Lesson — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

16 A Birth-day Blessing — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 3 (15 January 1835)

19 Sunday School Lesson — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 4 (22 January 1835)

26 Sunday School Lesson — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 5 (29 January 1835)

34 Sunday School Lesson — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 7 (12 February 1835)

51 Conversation with a Child — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 9 (26 February 1835)

67 Explanation and Reply — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 14 (2 April 1835)

108 Lesson on Pilgrim’s Progress — Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
“P. P.”

Vol. 1, No. 15 (8 April 1835)

114	Lesson on Pilgrim's Progress "P. P."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 17 (23 April 1835)	
140	The New Body "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 18 (30 April 1835)	
140	Lessons on Pilgrim's Progress "P. P."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 21 (21 May 1835)	
161	The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 22 (28 May 1835)	
170	The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 24 (11 June 1835)	
185	The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

Christian Register and Boston Observer (1835)

	Vol. 14, No. 58 (19 September 1835)	
1	The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man Anon.	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 14, No. 59 (26 September 1835)	
1	The Life of Christ in the Soul of Man "_____"	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

Western Messenger (1835)

	Vol. 1, No. 3 (September 1835)	
195	Formation of the Moral Character "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody
	Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1835)	
241	Formation of the Moral Character "E."	Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

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